Important notes:
INCO IS A PRETENDER, USES A FACADE TO DESPERATELY APPEAL TO WHAT HE BELIEVES TO BE "ACCEPTED".

OLIVIA PROJECTS APATHY TO HIDE HERSELF FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD DUE TO HER FEAR OF INADEQUACY AND THAT HER WHEELCHAIR IS ALL THAT MANY DEFINE HER AS (ALOOF)

DAMIEN IS WELL MEANING BUT STUPID AND OFTEN MISUNDERSTANDS PEOPLE, HOLDS NO GRUDGES

LIZ IS NO NONSENSE AND FOCUSED ON HER OWN FUTURE, GETS FLUSTERED AROUND DAMIEN AND GETS FRUSTRATED AT HIS AIRHEADEDNESS

BEN HAS A STRONG BLACK/WHITE MENTALITY, DISREGARDS NUANCE IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

MIA DOESN'T LIKE OTHERS GETTING THE UPPER HAND OVER HER IN SUBJECTS SHE INVESTS IN, WANTS PEOPLE TO WANT HER[a][b]

IADAKAN IS BOMBASTIC, GOES FROM 0 TO 100 RATHER QUICKLY, HAS NOTHING TO LOSE, AND DEEPLY INVESTED IN SEEING THE BEST OUT OF HIS STUDENTS

SCALER IS AT HER ROPE'S END IN DEALING WITH OLIVIA, BUT DOES WANT HER TO SUCCEED. EXHAUSTED MOTHER FIGURE
(Scaler's vulnerability being something to highlight earlier in the script re: Olivia's vulnerability)

FERRIS IS STERN BUT HONEST, AND WANTS TO HOLD PEOPLE TO THIS HIGHER STANDARD FOR THEIR, AND OTHER'S, BENEFIT.

Common themes to keep in mind: learning to define your own identity, one failure does not make you 'a' failure.

Character tags:
I = Inco
O = Olivia
Scal = Principal Scaler
Coach = Coach Solly
D = Damien
L = Liz

B = Ben
Iad = Iadakan
Mia = Mia (shocking, I know)
G = G-Man (Mr. Ferris)
T = Mr. Triggums

Formatting tags:
{s} strikethrough {/s}

_____
Chapter 1

#Black screen, low mellow ost
“August twenty-first.”

“Year? 201M2022 B.C.”

“Amid the arid heat of the morning sun of Volcaldera Bluff, I can’t help but miss living in the more temperate weather of the midwest.”

[i]”’Canvas is making a comeback!’”[/i]

“I’m unfollowing that account for sure.”

#-phone sprite on screen, show off knock-off twitter-

#“I withdraw my phone from the pocket of my denim jacket, following through with my last thought.”

#>>Unfollow him

#“Never following fashion advice again.”

#>>Don’t unfollow him

“At least the sunglasses were a good idea.”

#-Drop phonesprite-

“What was I doing again?”

“Oh, yeah. New place means new routines.”

“Like trying to find my way to school.”

“...”

“I just hope that next time, my parents are able to drive me like they promised.”

“Now then, which way?”

“...”

“I don’t recall any bus schedule from the school itself.”

“Maybe the public transit system accommodates students?”

#phonesprite again

“A quick check of Gruugle and yep, student hours and schedules.”

“I zero in on the nearest station on the digital map. Another five minute walk in this heat but better than the two hour walk I’d have to take otherwise.”

“...”

#Fade in Metro station bg

“There doesn’t seem to be many people here.”

“And the schedule says I’ve got some time to kill.”

"Glancing around, it looks like every one of my fellow commuters is glued to their phone."

“In comparison, I’m sitting around with my hands on my lap, looking ahead like I’m expecting something to happen before my eyes.”

"Guess I should follow everyone's example.”

"..."

“My phone’s browser is a laggy mess as I jump from different tabs and enter URLs I’ve memorized by heart, searching for anything new since the last half hour I checked.”

“Well, nothing of note.”

“Guess I’ll just waste time playing solitaire or something…”

#train sfx here?

“I continue playing on my phone’s solitaire app even as a crusty old metro train pulls up to the station.”

“It comes to a screeching halt, and the doors open not long after.”

“I file in with the rest of the crowd.”

#Train interior CG

“As much as I’d like to catch up on some light reading, I decide to put my phone away.”

“As much as I want to keep reading, I don’t want to miss my stop because I’m not paying attention.”

“Especially considering this whole train riding thing is new to me.”

“I look around for a place to sit down.”

“There’s a window seat, and one near the aisle.”

“I weigh the options before me…”

>>Take the window seat
>>Take the aisle seat

>Taking the window seat
“The window seat’s a good choice if I want to keep an eye for my stop.”

“Plus, it’ll let me divert my attention by looking at all the sights as the train makes its way through the city.”

>Taking the aisle seat
“The aisle seat’s pretty comfy looking, and it’s close to the exit.”

“Plus, it’s a bit out of the way of other riders, meaning a lot more privacy for me and my phone browsing.”

>Choices convergence

“I take my seat and the train takes off not five seconds later.”

“All I can do now is wait for the ride to end.”

#Fade to black

“Several minutes and a couple of stops later, I arrive at the stop closest to my new school.”

#low-volume alarm or glass-breaking sfx here

"New school… Just the thought of it is nerve-wracking."

"...Just keep going, Inco. You’ll be fine.”"

#sfx from above stops here
#Keep the OST silent

“It doesn’t take long before I’m climbing the final staircase out of the station.”

“Just a few more minutes of walking, and…”

#Play school theme here
#School front bg

“I’m finally here.”

“St. Hammond High, my new home away from home for the next year.”

“I really hope it’ll be a good one.”

“St. Hammond is known for its heavily prioritized art programs.”

“Over two-thirds of the graduates end up pursuing a career in the arts.”

“...Although half of them deeply regret that decision, and the other half won’t break out of their delusion until much later.”

“It’s also the management’s claim to fame, with the facade on the

front entrance being dominated by a vibrant mural.”

“I think I got a good feeling about this place.”

“At least, that’s what I tell myself before stepping through the front entrance.”

#Mural CG (if we have one)

"Above the double doors lies the school's slogan:"

"{i}Let yourself be astounded by the magnificence of your own brilliance{/i}."

"Yup, seems like something that would get written in a school mural…"[c][d][e]

"...Or some ancient power-obsessed orangutan with terrible hair."

“I hear the muffled chatter of the students inside, meandering aimlessly before the morning bell rings.”

“I’m ready to make this year really count.”

“It’s my last one before I need to step out into the ‘real world’, after all.”

“For that, though, I’ll need to actually put myself out there.”

“This is a prime opportunity to meet a load of new people and make a lot of new friends.”

“I wonder what my old friends are up to?”

“...”

“...There’s a painful lack of meaningful memories from my last

three years.”

“There’s even less memories of my old friends, if I could even call them that.”

“If I’m going to be an artist, it’s part of the job to actually have experiences, right?”

“Something about responsibility and hard work and yada, yada, yada.”

“Either way, I’ll do whatever it takes.”

“With my resolve steeled, I push through the front door.”

#hallway cg

#Track fitting of a school setting

“... Whoa.”

“The local populace dominates the space in the halls.”

“There were some dinos at my old school, but here in St. Hammond…”

“I feel like I stepped into the wrong building.”

“There are many different kinds of saurians here.”

“Scales, feathers, tails… is that a tether?”[f]

“Wings, talons and webbed hands.”

“Not to even mention the colors.”

“There’s even one in a wheelchair near the end of the hall.”

“Kinda feel bad for that one…”

“Have any of these guys ever even seen a human in perso-”

#cut off previous line, segue into next line?

#hallway bg, Inco shock, transition music to upbeat humor ost

??? “WHOA, IS THAT A HUMAN?!”

“Uh oh.”

“I’m soon surrounded and overrun by a crowd of neon-colored teenagers.”

??? “Wow, he’s like a life-size mannequin!”

??? “Hey, new kid!”

"The crowd quickly overwhelms me."

“Is… is this what it’s like to be popular?”

“A few students are even posing to take selfies.”

??? “Wow, a Human!”

??? “Are you like, a foreign exchange student?”

“Should I say something?”

??? “Is English not your first language?”

??? “I got this. *ahem* ‘Ow yA doo’eN ma fren?”

??? “Dude, not cool! They don’t all talk like that!”

“Man, is this how it’s gonna be?”

>> “Correct them.”
>> “Play along.”

>>Regardless of choice

“Everyone’s talking at once, I can’t get a word in…”

“I’ve never interacted with this many people at once.”

“Should I get used to this kind of thing from now on?”

"Unbidden hands reach out, brushing against my bare skin."

“Something rough and scaly slides across my hand, almost making me jump.”

??? "Whoa, bro, it's so smooth!"

??? “Hey, we can say we've got a human friend now, right?”

“There is some laughter coming from the crowd.”

“I instinctually laugh along with the crowd, which only prompts more laughter followed by pats on my back and more requests for selfies.”

??? “Hey man, you gotta give me your InstaGlyph!”

??? “I want it too! Here, let me type mine out for you!”

“Despite the initial shock of the sudden attention, I slowly give in to my newfound popularity.”

“As I reach out to oblige my new crowd of fans, the bell suddenly rings.”

#SFX Bell

BING BONG BING BONG

#Change SFX to something mellow/chill

“Almost instantly, the crowd goes from swarming me to dispersing all over the place like scared ants.”

“Dozens of voices arise from the crowd in a cacophony of noise as my new fans disperse to the four winds.”

??? “Aw man, lost track of time.”

??? “Crap, can’t afford to be late again! Sorry, new human friend.”

??? “Hey, if you’re around for lunch, I still wanna exchange InstaGlyphs!”

“It doesn’t take long before the hall empties out, leaving me all alone.”

#BG is hallway, Inco is on the left facing right all by his lonesome

“I look around me and can’t help but wonder just where I should go next.”

“Not like I have an actual destination to get to.”

“Before I can pick a direction to head to, I hear what sounds like a series of escalating tones.”

DING, DONG

DONG, DING

PA “Will one Inco G. Nito please head to the principal’s office.”

PA “Inco G. Nito to the principal’s office, thank you.”

“Okay, that answers my question of where to go next.”

“But… where is the Principal’s office…?”

#Fade out/Fade in
#Hallway, front of Scaler’s Office BG

“Well, it ook a bit longer than expected, but after getting lost in the halls for at least five minutes, I ran into the security guard, who so politely pointed me in the direction of the Principal’s office.”

“Turns out I wasn’t even in the right building…”

“Getting hopelessly lost notwithstanding, I do make it to my destination.”

“Before I reach the door though, I spot a blue parasaurolophus waiting patiently by it.”

“Soon as he spots me rounding the corner, he perks up, straightens his coat, and puts on a smile.”[g][h]

Play Ben’s theme (if we have one. If not, make one for him)[i]

??? “Finally.”

??? “You must be Inco.”

“His welcoming simper is betrayed somewhat by a[j][k]n irritated tapping of his foot."

??? “My name is Ben.”

B “ I’ll be your guide of sorts to help you settle into St. Hammond.”

I “Hello. I’m Inco.”

I “Nice to meet you.”

"Even to my own ears, my greeting sounds forced and robotic."

"Guess I'm not used to introducing myself…"

“I reach my hand out and grasp his.”

“I remember all the advice for giving handshakes I was told over the years.”

“Firm grip, but not too firm; don't want to crush his hand or anything”

#Slide inco and Ben closer to one another

“I squeeze, gauging the pressure mentally. I can feel warm scales press and imprint against the flesh of my hand. It’s an odd sensation…

“...But if the rest of my school year will be around dinosaurs, I guess I’ll have to learn to get used to it.”

“When he pulls away, I can’t help but feel anxious.”

B "Sorry to cut our introduction short, but the principal's been waiting for you."

B "We were, uh, expecting you a little sooner, actually."

"His voice carries the hint of a reproach."

"My already high anxiety levels start to spike."

"Have I already messed up?”

“Should I have studied the school map more?"

B “Right this way.” [l][m]

“The blue dino turns toward the nearest door, with ‘Principal’s Office’ prominently printed on the window.”

#Kills OST

“Suddenly, the door flings open.”

“For a split second, I swear I could see fear register in Ben’s bespeckled eyes.”

#slide Inco away from Ben, and fade in Scaler facing left right next to Ben

“Ben grabs his foot, his face contorted with a mask of quiet agony.”

#Play Scaler’s theme (or the next nearest applicable OST)

??? “Ah, you must be Mr. Guhnitro!”

“The Oviraptor greets me with arms wide open.”

“A hot cup of… something hangs dangerously in one hand, and the look on her face tells me she desperately needs to ingest said

drink in her hand.”

"Wait, 'Guhnitro'? Is that supposed to be me?"

"I mean, I've got an unusual name, but that wasn't even in the same post-code!"

"I glance behind me for a second, half-expecting another new student to be lurking there."

#turn Inco around for a second before turning him back

I “Yyyyyes?”

??? “I’m Principal Scaler!”

Scal “It’s so wonderful to have you here in St. Hammond!”

“I’m a bit lost for words at first upon seeing my new principal.”

“Maybe it’s the fact that she’s a dino, but I swear she can’t look much older than her early thirties.”

“I didn’t even think you could be a principal until you were like past fifty or something.”

“I start to reach out for a handshake.”

“Good morning, uh… Ms. Scaler?”

“Principal Scaler suddenly blinks her eyes shut and turns to face Ben.”

“Thankfully, I’m able to pull my hand back before I suffer any embarrassment.”

#Flip scaler to face Ben

Scal “Oh, Ben, there you are!”

Scal “Didn’t see you there.”

“If looks could kill, there would be a dead body on the floor right now.”

B “M-morning, ma’am…”

“I feel your pain, man.”

Scal “Have you been showing the Hum-...”

#text should appear quickly
B “aHEM”

Scal “...-NEW student around?”

"Her eyes flicker towards me with a crystalline smile frozen on her face."

#would need something like the naser explanatory sprite for Scaler here, that same sense of desperation.

“...Wha?”

"I glance towards Ben, noting an equally rigid grin on his face as well."

"Like they're both waiting for me to say something."

#music stops here

I "..."

"I manage a weak smile."

#music continues here

“They practically sag in relief, genuine smiles shared between us all now.”

"Potential speciesist-crisis averted, Ben turns his attention back to the principal."

B “Not… Not yet, ma’am.”

B “I was just about to get on that…”

Scal “Hmm! Well, hop to it!”

Scal “We should get Mr. Gonytwo situated here as soon as possible!”

#Flip Scaler to face inco

Scal "You'll have to forgive me, but I've got to run."

Scal “Inclow, on behalf of the faculty, we hope you enjoy your stay here at St. Hammonds.”

Scal “Let us know if there’s [i]anything[/i] we can do to help accommodate you!”

I "Well, actually, my name's not-"

#Flip Scaler to face Ben

"But Scaler is already turning her attention back to Ben."

Scal "When you get back Ben, remember: Cream, two sugars this time."

"Her sing-song voice from before has been replaced by a much gruffer one."

"Ben visibly pales."

B "Y-Yes, Ma'am."

Scal "And I'm not drinking that compy-piss you tried to give me last time."

Scal "Roarbucks finest, understood?"

Scal "We don't want a repeat of what happened this summer, do we Ben?"

"Scaler taps a claw on the side of her coffee mug."

"...An extremely {i}sharp{/i} claw…"

"Ben gulps."

Ben "N-No Ma'am."

Scaler "Excellent!"

#Flip Scaler back to Inco

Scaler "Enjoy your first day, Mr. Gnocchi."

#Fade/Dissolve Scaler
#Slide Ben closer to Inco again
#Play Ben’s OST again

B "S-Sorry you had to see that, Inco."

I "You, uh… You okay?"

"Ben manages to smile through clenched teeth."

B "S'my fault.”

B “I always forget she opens the door like that."

B "And that coffee thing was just a little joke, ha ha."

"How wound-up is this guy?"

I "But Ms. Scaler was totally-"

#punch sfx, Ben gets closer to Inco

B "PRINCIPAL Scaler is doing a great job, okay?"

"Ben's voice hits an octave just on the edge of my hearing."

"His whole body starts to vibrate, like a wire under extreme tension."

"But just as soon as it starts, it's gone, leaving Ben like a balloon with all the air let out."

B "...Sorry about that."

B "It's just… The administration around here is under a lot of stress."

B "As Student Council President, I try to help, but Ms. Scaler can be a little…"

"Ben searches for the right words, hands gesturing aimlessly in the air."

I "...Demanding?"

B "Hah!”

B “I was going to say crazy."

"The patterned parasaurolophus' expression slides back to his usual smile."

"Seems whatever crisis Ben just experienced, it's passed for now."

B “Right, shall we start your tour?"

B "C'mon, it'll be great!”

B “I know the whole history of St. Hammond's!"

"Ben throws an arm around my shoulders, steering me out into the halls."

B "So, in 201M2006, the school experienced what's known now as the "Vampisaur Crash", an event which…"

#fade to black
#Play Chill OST
#Fade back in
#Hallway BG

"The tour progressed slowly, with Ben limping along beside me."

"Every few minutes, a new student or two would come up to Ben and ask how his summer was."

"Guess he's pretty popular around here."

"Ben would also introduce me as the 'new student, and my new pal', causing another round of selfies and skin-ogling."

"It felt nice, having a friend to talk to for once."

"Ben and I were half-way through the tour, with the first period still minutes away, before he dropped the question I had been dreading to hear."

B “So, what brings you here, Inco?”

I “Pardon?”

B “What brings you to this school?”

B “You transferred in, right?”

I “Ah, yeah…”

"I could feel my throat start to tighten."

I “I-it's a long story.”

I “Maybe I'll tell you later, haha….”

B “Hm.”

“Ben lets it drop, offhandedly mentioning the many of the programs the school is known for.”

“His words begin to bleed and meld together as I think back to the conversations between me and my parents.”

“Job change. Barely any notice.”

“A day’s heads-up and then goodbye highschool life...”

“Not like I had much of one at my old school anyways.”

"Really, what did I have to leave behind?"

"No friends, not really.”

“Just a lot of people who bossed me around, a lot of hushed laughter as I entered a room.”

"So why do I care so much that it's all gone?"

"I can make a fresh start now, can't I? Reinvent myself to whatever I want to be!"

"..."

"You just have to figure out what that is, Inco…"

“While I stew in the negative thoughts, I swear I hear a noise in the distance.”

“What almost sounds like wheel squeaking.”

#insert Wheel squeak SFX
#Kill Current OST

“I turn my head just in time to see something speeding down the hall.”

“Or rather, [i]someone[/i].”

#cg change to olivia going very fast high speed
#Play something high-strung/perilous sounding

[n]
“An alligator looking girl in a purple hoodie scythes her way through the mass of students, causing several to leap out of the way at the last second.”

??? "Hey, watch it!"

??? "Geez, you almost ran me over!"

"She doesn't even look back at the angry crowd behind her."

“You’d think she’d be scared of hitting someone...”

“S-someone like-”

#close up zoom

??? “Move!”

I “HOLY CRAP!”

"I get one good look at her as she rides by, into a face filled not with anger or contempt…"

"But with sadness."

“I toss myself to the side and away from the green speed demon before she can run me over with her wheelchair…”

“...and I smack directly into a wall…”

#Hard Cut to Black
#Kills the OST

“...”

“The only thing I recall from the next few seconds is a white flash and an all-encompassing void.”

“...”

“Oh, here comes the pain.”

“Ow…”

“...”

#Resume chill OST

“After writhing around for a bit, I finally noticed a blue-scaled hand lowered in my direction.”

B "Here, let me…"

“Ben grabs my hand, and he lifts me to my feet.”

“I have to watch my balance before I have another intimate meeting with the floor.”

“He lets go and turns to face the direction of the still speeding green girl.”

“He lets out a sigh and shakes his head.”

“Before I can ask what the heck had just happened, I hear a shout reverberating through the hallway.”

Scal “STOP RIGHT THERE, YOUNG LADY!”

“Seconds later, Principal Scaler stops right in front of Ben and I, beads of sweat on her forehead, face red as a tomato, and mug of whatever she was drinking still tightly gripped in her hand.”

Scal “Which way did she go!?”

“Ben turns to face in the direction the gator girl raced down the hall.”

“Scaler’s face turns even redder as she rolls up her sleeves.”

Scal “When I get my hands on that girl, I swear…”

“Without so much as another word, she hands Ben her mug of still burning liquid.”

“To Ben’s credit, he grabs the cup by the ear, preventing a potential burn to his hands.”

“Principal Scaler then takes off running down the hall, heels hanging from her hands, covering a frightening amount of ground in a relatively short amount of time.”

“I’m in awe at the sight of her, to be honest."

"What an absolute unit."

“Not everyday you see your new principal turn into a hundred-meter dash champion…”

“Ben, at last, turns to look at me and lets out another sigh.”

“Yup. I definitely did not just see a gator in a wheelchair going sixty miles an hour down the school hallways, followed by the principal of said school chasing said wheelchair gator and not only matching that speed, but likely surpassing it...”

I “Err...”

I “I guess that happens often?”

"Ben shakes his head, carefully transferring the mug to his other hand."

B “Trust me, you don't want to know...”

“His chuckle eases the tension somewhat."

"Already, students who were just seconds ago in danger of becoming the world's largest roadkill are laughing like nothing

even happened."

"I laugh along as well."

B “So, class is about to start.”

B “I'll get you to your first period.”

“We can talk later, during third period.”

I “Wait, I have you for third period?”

“I pause for a second really thinking over what Ben had just revealed to me.”

I “Actually, how do you know my schedule in the first place?”

“Ben’s eyes widen as he reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a folded piece of paper.”

B “Oh crud, I’m super sorry!”

B “I should have given you this sooner, but I kinda got distracted by everything else.”

“He hands me the piece of paper, which I unfold to see that it’s my school schedule going forward.”

B “I took the liberty of studying it while waiting for you to arrive.”

B “Figured that, since I was going to be giving you the tour, I might as well know what your first period room would be.”

B “Sorry if it came off as a bit intrusive.”

“I fold up my schedule and give Ben a comforting smile.”

“Ben lets out a sigh of relief before continuing on down the hall.”

“He doesn’t take more than five steps before he stops in his tracks and looks down at the rapidly cooling mug of sludgy brown… whatever…”

B “Oh, I almost forgot…”

#Ben fade out, fade in behind Inco

“The straitlaced student is quick to dash down the hall we were just at, and then come back with nary a sweat on him, hands empty.”

I "Was that… necessary?"

"Ben fixes me with a long-suffering look."

B “Last time she left me with her favorite mug, I didn’t know what to do with it…"

#show ben embarrassed

B "...So I just carried it around until lunch time..."

"Wait, is he serious…"

"The reddening of Ben's cheeks tells me he is."

I "Oh."

"Clearing his throat, Ben motions for me to follow him once more."

B "Anyways, let's get you to your class."

#Ben and Inco cross screen, fade out
#Kills OST
#Play second version of Chill OST

“Ben took the lead, guiding me to my first class.”[o][p]

“The day seemed to fly by, partly because of the shortness of the periods today.”

“And partly from the weird emptiness of the class, with a couple students evidently missing the first day.”

“And even some teachers, too.”

“Like my second and third period teacher, Mr. Iadakan, who had a substitute in their place.”

“Which was disappointing, since I was actively looking forward to the Photography elective.”

"This was the class that Ben and I were supposed to share, but just as I noticed him walking in…"
#SFX PA Chime
Ding Dong
Dong Ding

Scaler "Could Ben please report to the Administration Office?"

"Ben gave me a sad little wave before turning on his heel back out of the classroom."

"I swear he started pulling out coffee creamer from his bag, too…"

"What made the awkwardness of the first day even worse were the students who were there."

"Everytime I entered a classroom, I was swarmed like before, lost in a sea of scales and tails and feathers."

"Seems everyone wants a piece of the new student…"

"I don't think I've ever had this many friend requests."

"Seems I just might get my wish here at St. Hammond."

#scene cafeteria

"The lunch bell puts an end to my premature celebrations, however."

"I suddenly find myself disgorged into a mass of students, each and every one knowing exactly where they belong."

"Except for me."

"Clutching my lunch to my chest, I make my way through a sea of unidentified faces."

??? "Yooo, new kid! Over here!"

??? "Nah man, come sit with us!"

??? "Like, isn't he soooo unique?"

"I'm quickly overwhelmed by the shouts following me wherever I go."

"Whomever I sit with is going to have a massive impact on me this year."

"What if I sit with the jocks? Or the valedictorians?"

#Fade out of current OST

"What if I end up sitting alone…"

"..."

"I think I've had enough of that last group at my previous school[q]."

"I realize I'm just standing there, paralyzed by indecision, until…"

#Play Ben’s OST

B "Hey, Inco!"

"I suddenly spy my bespectacled blue friend from before, waving at me through the crowd."

"At last, a lifeline…"

"I pick up the remnants of the table's conversation as I take the seat next to Ben."

B “... and then I said, ‘I thought she was a Stegosaurus!’”

“He bursts out into laughter after finishing his joke." [r]

"I play along as I start to unpack my lunch out of sympathy for his feelings.”

"The joke might be awful, but if it gets me a group to sit with…"

“Don’t quit your day job, Ben.”

“I take a facefull of sandwich, giving my mouth an excuse to do something other than pretend to laugh at corny stand-up comedy.”

B “Ahh… but anyways. Inco. What did you think of the Photography

class?”

“That was a good question.”

“Couldn't really say, considering the teacher wasn’t there, but his lesson plan was pretty coherent and insightful…”

I “Well, aside from the teacher being absent, I liked the lesson.”

I “Though, I think the bit about taking landscape photography was really lacking.”

I “Like, the teacher barely talked about some of the finer details of scouting for a location and the golden hours of the lighting and…”

“Before I could stop myself, I found myself going on and on about all that I knew about landscape photography.”

“By the time I realized how much I was flapping my gums about a subject that most would find technical and boring, I had spoken for almost ten minutes.”

“Instinctively, I prepare a canned apology for wasting my new friend’s time and brain cells, but rather than facing a person bored out of their minds, I instead see someone who is beaming at me with newfound interest.”

B “Wow Inco, I didn’t know you were so passionate about photography.”

I “I mean… I dabble in it here and there. It’s just a passing interest, you know…”

“Ben gives me a smile as he shakes his head.”

B “Oh no, my friend. That was more than just a ‘passing interest.’”

B “You really enjoy the art of photography, don’t you?”

“Ben laughs a little.”

B “Yeah! I can tell for sure!”

“This might just be the first time anyone’s really reciprocated my passion for photography.”

“It feels… a bit weird, if I’m being honest…”

I “So… I take it you also like photography?”

B “You bet I do.”

B “I find it [i]extremely[/i] fulfilling.”

#Ben happy.JPG

B “I often go out and take as many pictures as I can regarding… anything active, really.”

B “A lot of the time I walk home from school, or go out and about on the weekends, and stumble across something that really [i] speaks to me[/i], you know?”

“I guess when you put it that way…”

I “Yeah…”

I “Yeah! I feel you!”

B “What kind of camera do you use?”

I “Well…”

“It's a bit embarrassing I haven’t upgraded in a while, but…”

I “I’ve been rocking a four year old Kinon. I know it’s not the latest of greatest, but it hasn’t let me down yet.”

B “Hey man, that was a pretty good year. Really strong model. No shame about still using such a powerful model, though maybe you should consider upgrading.”

B “So for this semester I finally buckled down and got myself a DSLR.”

B “I got a good deal on a midrange Cavon, which came with a set of lenses.”

“Ben then began to devolve into a ramble about his own camera and lens setups.”

“Even how he’d started renting out studios to practice in.”

“But honestly, some of his suggestions and set-up were just ridiculous.”

“I mean, using a 800 ISO in this weather?!”

“It’s so sunny out here, 200 ISO at most would be great. Does he make colored rorschach tests?”

“By Raptor Jesus what are his default *ƒ*-stop and shutter?!”

B “Say, Inco, since you’re just as invested into photography as I am, how about you join the St. Hammond Summer arts contest?”

I “The… what?”

B "Wait, do you not-"

"Ben stares at me for a second."

B "Oh, that's right, Iadakan was out today!"

"The sound of his fist making contact on the table makes me, and everyone else, jump."

B "It was supposed to be announced in class!”

B “The St. Hammond Summer Arts Contest!"

B “Every year, the school holds an art contest at the start of the new semester.”

B “It’s… kind of a [i]BIG[/i] deal to win!”

“A big deal you say?”

I “Why’s that?”

B “For starters, it looks really good on your work portfolio, and colleges are always looking for that kind of thing.”

B “And also the piece is used as the cover of the yearbook. Fully credited and everything!”

#Ben considering

“Ben sighs and looks down.”

B “I’ve been entering it every year… but I never really make it past the second round of votes.”

“He suddenly grins”

B “But this year I’m really feeling it.”

B “I just know I’ll do better!”

“...”

I “Wow.”

I “Uh… you’re pretty invested in this contest, aren’t you?”

B “Nothing like the investment I made into my craft though.”

I “I can imagine.”

“Yeah, I can definitely relate with you, Ben…”

#Kills the OST

??? “Ey, Ben!”

“A voice suddenly cuts into the conversion Ben and I had just been having from somewhere across the cafeteria.”

#fade in mia to the side
#Play Mia’s OST

“The callout snaps both Ben and I out of our respective trances.”

"I can't help but notice that most of the table has left by now, leaving us alone with the newcomer."

"Guess our conversation about photography wasn't the most interesting one…"

B “Oh, Mia! Have a good summer?”

"The new girl Mia swishes her hair out of her face."

Mia "S'alright.”

Mia “Mom and {i}him{/i} up and left me to spend a week up at Fern Springs."

Mia "Not like I'd want to be anywhere near them when they start actin' all lovey-dovey."

"From the size of that sneer I take it Mia isn’t too pleased at this."

"Her spiny tail swishes back and forth angrily."

"Not to mention those clenched fists."

"Our gazes cross, and Mia's eyes narrow."

Mia "Hey, what's with ya, baldie? Been starin' at me this whole time!"

"Baldie?!"

I "S-sorry, sorry, I didn't mean to-"

B "Now, Mia, play nice.”

B “Don't want to leave bad impressions."

B "Mia, this is my friend Inco.”

B “He's new to St. Hammond."

"Ben gives Mia a glance, and Mia in turn gives me a nod and a grunt."

Mia "New, huh'?”

Mia “Sorry about that, baldie, didn't know you was Ben's chum."

Mia “Look, Ben, lunch is almost over an’ I was… eh, wonderin’ if we could do some of that math tutorin’ thing now.”

Mia “Ya' know, might as well get it over with…”

"Her face begins to redden, nearly enough to match her jacket."

#Ben shocked?

B “Oh shoot!”

B “I’m sorry, Mia.”

B “I completely forgot!”

“Ben scrambles around for his bag."

#as this text appears, flip and slightly move Ben as if he was indeed scrambling around

B "Inco, I'd like you to meet Mia.”

B “She's…where is that pen…ah!"

"Ben holds up the utensil triumphantly for a second."

B "She's quite the mechanic here at St. Hammond."

B "Now, we're not normally known for our carshop or mechanics courses here, but Mia is on the cutting edge of-"[s][t]

Mia "Yeah yeah yeah, zip it, smartie."

Mia "I wanna' get this lesson in while I'm still in high school, ya dig?"

"Mia flashes me what I think is supposed to be an impish grin."

B "Oh.”

B “Oh! Uh, sure…"

B “Sorry to leave on such short notice, Inco. I have [i]prior arrangements.[/i]”

#Show ben nervous/flustered sprite

"Mia grins triumphantly."

#Happy/Smug Mia.JPG

I “It’s fine.”

I “Thanks for sharing your thoughts on photography.”

I “It was absolutely enlightening.”

B “Don’t mention it!”

B “Honestly, I think it would be a good idea for you to look into the art contest.”

B “I think you’ll go pretty far if you enter!”

"I can feel a momentary squeeze of panic."

"I’ve never done anything as bold as enter a contest, let alone have a shot at winning one.”

I "T-thanks Ben, sounds good.”

I “Maybe I could get your-"

Mia "Ughhh, enough!"

#Show mia annoyed.jpg

#Slide ben and mia away
#Fade out OST

I "-opinion on… what to enter."

I "..."

"Suddenly, I'm left all alone."

"Mercifully, a glance at the clock reveals my torturous lunch period is almost over."

"I hastily cram the rest of my uneaten lunch into my mouth before shoveling my things back in my bag."

"Half-way there, Inco, don't screw this up now…"

#fade to black
--After School-

#Hallway bg
#contemplative music

"My classes after lunch were pretty much the same as before."

"By now I had grown accustomed to the routine: Half-muffled whispers and gawking looks whenever I took the floor to introduce myself."

"A barrage of selfies in the halls."

??? "Hey man, give us a pose!"

"And a feeling like no matter how many people I was surrounded by, this newfound popularity wouldn't last."

"..."

"I kept thinking back to what Ben said, about the art contest, how everyone would enter."

"If I could make a big splash there, really blow everyone away, then maybe I could…"

Mia "Hey!"

#Play Mia’s OST

"A familiar voice shakes me out of my thoughts."

"Mia, the girl from before, peels herself off from a group of Seniors ahead of me."

Mia "Finally.”

Mia “I've been looking for ya!"

"For me?"

"I can't imagine this chick wanting anything to do with me."

Mia "Look, I think we got off on the wrong foot earlier."

"Mia gives me an oily smile."

Mia "I was just stressed out 'cuz of the lesson."

Mia "I just wanna' make sure that we're cool’n all, ya dig?"

"A passing group of underclassmen interrupts our conversation, asking for more of the dreaded selfies."

"Mia attaches herself to me, nearly muscling me out of frame before shoo'ing the others away."

Mia "Look, let me level with yous."

Mia "Yous new here.”

Mia “Yous need someone to show you the ropes."

"Mia lays an arm across my shoulders."

Mia "Otherwise, well…"

"Shaking her head with a sharp intake of breath, Mia lets her words hang in the air."

“What’s left unsaid, I ‘think’ I can fill in myself.”

I “R-right, yeah. I mean, you’re Ben’s friend, I’m Ben’s friend.”

I “So that makes us friends… I think?”

#Show Mia sprite looking flatly

Mia “...”

#Show Mia sprite raising an eyebrow

#pause for a second or two

Mia "..."

#Show Mia sprite smiling again

Mia "...Sure, let's go with that, Badlie."

"She gives me a shove, her tail pushing me even further away from her."

Mia "Like I's said, ya need to know the ropes… and I knows 'em the best 'round these parts."

B "Inco! Mia!"

"When did Ben get here?"

#Ben fade in behind Mia

B "Didn't think I'd see you two together."

Mia "What, s'not like I wasn't doing nothing."

Mia "Just want'd to clear the air 'tween Inco and your's truly."

"Ben glances my way."

"I mean, she [i]IS[/i] his friend. And both of them get on well enough I think."

I "Yeah, Mia was actually apologizing for what happened at lunch."

B "Ah, okay."

B "Well…"

#Ben considering

B “So where did we leave off?”

#Mia Happy

Mia “Prolly that dumb contest.”

Mia “Every year, ‘round this time of year, you don’t shut yer yap ‘bout it.”

#Ben Sad

B “Well...”

#Ben Happy

B “This year for sure I’ll at least make it to the third round of votes!”

“The parasaurolophus pair[u](pair’o’saurs, gotta write that down for next time) laugh with each other.”

I “The contest, yeah.”

I “I, uh…”

B “Hm?”

I “Well, I do want to enter it.”

I “Just, I don’t know anything about it, really.”

I “Like the rules or anything.”

I “Plus there’s having to either find something in my portfolio or trying to make something on the spot or-”

B “Don’t worry!”

B “Here, I can airdrop you the poster with the rules for it.”

“I’m quick to drag my phone out of my heavy jacket’s pocket, with Ben doing the same, and after a few minutes I have not only all the details I need but also Ben and Mia’s contact info as a bonus.”

I “Thank you, guys.”

Mia “Yeah, like ole’ Benny-boy here said, no need to worry ‘bout it.”

B “Yeah, I’m sure you’ve got some good stuff in your portfolio. I can’t wait to see it!”

Mia “Stills, think it’s ‘bout time we beat it.”

Mia “You comin’ Smartypants?”

B “Yeah, and thanks again for the lift, Mia.”

“They leave, Ben waving as they make their way to the school’s parking lot.”

“A part of me wonders if I should stick around here too. After all, I’ve got more friends that still want selfies with me.”

“But I think I’d rather get to work on this contest business.”

“Yeah, I think I’ll just head home for now and scour my portfolio.”

“I’m sure I can touch up some of my older outdoor shots in TerraCotta CavePaint.”

“Hah, man, I really should upgrade to WallArt Premier.”

“...”

#Fade to black,
#Fade out music

--End Chapter--
_____
Chapter 2
Aug 22
Arriving at school, Inco can choose to either talk with Ben or Submit his work on his own.
Choosing to have Inco submit his work on his own has Inco meet Liz and Scaler again before turning in his submission, and having Inco find Ben first has Ben give Inco encouragement to submit, and then Inco goes to his first period class, PE.
PE class is taught by Coach Solly, and he meets Damien, one of Olivia's friends. Afterwards, Inco goes to his art class (official introduction of Olivia and iadakan). Olivia is very interested and passionate about the subject matter, to the point of accusing Inco of cheating off her notes. In the next passing period, Iadakan apologizes to inco for Olivia's behavior and alludes to art being Olivia's passion being a justification for her actions.
During lunch, Inco hangs out with Liz and Damien (potentially the first time the player sees Liz). Olivia passively eats lunch and leaves without saying much.
Afterwards Inco shares a period with Olivia in History, taught by Mr. Triggums. Olivia is noticeably deflated and does not even attempt participating in the assignments.
After school, Ben invites Inco to play dodgeball, Olivia steps up to play at Mia's goading. Inco gets his hands on a ball, and the player can choose to take a shot at Olivia, or to hold back.
Taking the shot, Inco beans Olivia in the face. She retaliates by decking him back in the face. Olivia begrudgingly helps him up. (+1 Olivia)
Holding back, he gets hit by another ball, Olivia still decks him in the face and calls him out for not taking the shot.

Chapter 2
#Fade in Inco room dark BG
#Play Casual OST

“A familiar alarm violently wakes me from a pleasant dream.”

“I stare at the dark ceiling in silence, a dull pain coating my eyes.”

“Sitting up in bed, I take a moment to examine my room.”

“It’s been less than a month since we moved here.”

“Mom and Dad were both offered lucrative jobs on the condition that they relocate to Volcaldera Bluffs.”

“They didn’t even bother telling me until they started packing our things.”

“I stand up and head towards the bathroom, trying to keep my thoughts going to distance myself from the painful memories of my old life.”

“I nearly twist my ankle as I go for my clothes for the day, the unopened boxes still in my room from the move making my routine more perilous than needed.”

#Brighten room
#Casual OST Mk. 2

“Maybe I should do something with those…”

“Rummaging through my closet, I remove my usual clothes for the day, mindful of the still-unpacked storage containers stacked inside.”

“They remind me of my old life, and for a second, I reminisce about the past.”

“...But my first day at St. Hammond was better than I ever had it there, so I’m sure I’ll like it here.”

“Distancing myself from the intrusive thoughts, I head for the shower and get to my morning routine.”

“I take the opportunity to practice some facial health care.”

"With all the attention my skin was getting yesterday, I made sure to pick something up on the way home to help out."

“I use a deep pore cleansing lotion, followed by a honey-almond body scrub specifically designed for humans."

"After I exit the shower, I apply an herbal-mint facial mask after picking it out from the six different ones I purchased from the local drugstore.”

“I peel the mask off after drying myself with a towel, revealing a slightly fresher-faced me."

"If I'm going to be the only human at school, I'm sure as hell going to be the best one there is."

“With my routine taken care of, I put on my clothes and go about the rest of my morning preparations.”

#show Inco's house

“Down in the kitchen, I prepare myself breakfast, skin still tingling from my morning routine.”[v][w]

“As I shovel food into my mouth, I get a chance to reconnect with the world through social media.”

“I like to read the personal accounts of others to stay up-to-date on trends and other events.”

“Even though I’ll never meet them, it helps me feel like I've got friends all over the world."

"Up until yesterday, these were the only friends I had."

“Though I probably shouldn’t keep dwelling in the past.”

“New year, new school, new me.”

#flip Inco (or move him to the other side of the screen)

I “I’m leaving now!”

“I call out into the living room, but it doesn’t look like my parents are home.”

“They probably left for work already.”

“...”

I “So much for getting a ride to school.”

I “Guess I can just take the train again.”

#fade to black
#Fade out OST
#Play chil school OST

“The warm morning air clings to me and my shirt as I walk along the sidewalk.”

“I still think about the exchange with Mia yesterday.”

“It stuck with me all night long.”

“Something about that girl’s whole greaser act is just… wrong.”

“Maybe I’m being too judgemental.”

“I push open the door to the school, looking past the residual looks I get from the other students.”

#Hallway bg

“With the way they stare, you’d think they’ve never seen a human before in their entire life.”

“My hand curls tightly around the USB drive in my pocket.”

“I had spent the better part of last night combing through my portfolio and cleaning up several photographs before deciding.”

“I can’t help but worry about the medium, though, since most of the examples on the website were drawn or painted.”

“Either way, if my work does well in the art contest, I figure I could really show my peers.”

“Though it doesn’t look like anybody’s commented on any of my InstaGlyph posts lately. Probably because [insert cope reason here]”

“Yeah, that’s it.”

“I’m glad I chose to go through with the contest.”

“It’s a way to get to know people and put myself out there after all, right?”

“As my feet take me further into the school, the back of my mind vomits a question.”

#darken edges of screen?

“[i]Should I ask Ben for help?[/i]”

“I stop in my tracks, shocked by the sudden stomach-churning anxiety.”

"[i]Do[/i] I need his help? I mean, I'm a grown adult. I don't need to ask his permission or anything…"

"But at the same time, I could get another chance to talk to him. Ask more questions."

"What if they have some weird submission format?"

"The chances that it's anything other than straightforward are slim, but never zero…"

>>Seek out Ben
>>Do it yourself

>Seek out Ben
"Maybe… Maybe I should ask Ben."

"He knows more than I do, so better safe than sorry."

"...."

"I now realize I don't know which homeroom Ben is in, or where I would find him outside of third period class."

"I check the time on my phone, and confirm I arrived a little early. Maybe he hasn't made it yet?"

"Well, it's better than wandering around like an idiot."

"I turn back around, retracing my steps all the way back to the school parking lot."

#Outside school parking lot CG

??? "Did he forget his bag of rocks?"

"I swear, I'm gonna go to the Counselor for this…"

“I push open the doors and, as providence would have it, I see a familiar blue face.”

#fade into outside of school.

“Ben steps out the passenger side of…”

“... a modern fossil of a car that screams ‘look at me and how cool I am!’”

#Mia’s Car CG
#Play Mia’s OST

“It’s got a cherry-hot red body and whipped-cream white accent along with some gaudy hot-rod flames alongside its two door convertible coupe.”

“It’s even got [i]Whitewall Tires[/i] of all things...”

“I’d bet anyone who ever even looked at this car in anything but a passing irony had hair completely saturated with gel and was clad in only the tightest leather jackets and wore only the darkest of sunglasses.”

“It looked more like a mechanical museum piece than an actual car.”[x][y][z][aa]

“Sure enough, the harbinger of doom and anxiety herself ducks her head and juts it forward, letting me see the sleaziest grin on her pale face.”

“She spots me among the crowd of other students and shoots me a sly grin and a wink.”

“It’s anything but friendly, and serves more as a reminder about what we talked about the day prior...”

“She turns to look at Ben one more time and after giving him a two-fingered salute, sets off on her own way, leaving Ben waving basically at no one.”

#Fade OST out
#Fade in Inco on the left, facing right, and Ben on the right, facing left. Both neutral
#Play Ben's OST

I "So… Mia gave you a lift this morning?"

B "Yes, we have an…. Arrangement..."

I "Sounds pretty serious."

#ben surprised with dissolve

B "N-No! It's not like that…"

B "I mean…"

B "Agh!"

I "I was just kidding, sorry!"

"For heaven's sake Inco, you need his help! Don't alienate the only real person you know on your second day!."

#Ben considering with dissolve

B "It's fine, I just… I don't want people getting ideas."

B "How would that look, y'know?"

I "Oh yeah no, I totally get you."

"Feels like there's something else he isn't letting on, but it's probably best not to pry."

I “Hey Ben, while I have you here, I want to ask you something…”

#dissolve to black
#Hallway CG

B “You were right to come and ask!”

B “So, what you’re going to do is…”

“...”

#Fade screen to black
#Fade screen back in
#Change CG to second version of the school hallway

B “...And then all you have to do is hit ‘submit’ on the webpage and you should be all good to go!”

I “Ah. I… I see…”

“Even after Ben’s explanation, I’m still a bit uncertain about such a quickly produced attempt, but hey, it’s the thought that counts.”

B “Don’t worry Inco, you’ll do fine!”

I “...I hope I do…”

“I give Ben a farewell wave and walk out of the classroom.”

“I’m still not fully sure about my submission, but the one thing I am sure of is that I’m on the right track towards having a great new life here in St. Hammond.”

#SFX School Bell
Bing Bong Bing Bong

“Oh darn, I spent so much time talking with Ben that I lost track of time.”

“Better get to class before I get marked tardy or worse, absent!”

#fade to black
#Fade out OST

>>move to converge

>Do it yourself
“Nah, I think I’ll be fine.”

“I’ve looked over the poster at least two dozen times by now.”

“All I gotta do for digital submissions is get the file onto the school’s shared drive.”

“So first things first, need to find a computer.”

“...”

“Er…”

“Oh crap, I don’t even know if this place has a computer lab or not.”

“Think, Inco.”

“Did I see one during my tour here?”

“M-maybe?”

“I’m sure if I retrace my steps from a couple weeks ago I can find it.”

“...”

#Fade out, fade in
#School Hallway CG

“Ambling around through the school hallways like a lost child doesn’t seem to be working.”

“The first floor of the school was a bust, and so far the second wasn’t looking any better.”

“As I turn a corner I notice the principal leaning her head out of a window for some reason.”

“A part of me doesn’t want to ask her, more so out of embarrassment than anything else.”

“But what else am I to do if I wanna get this turned in on time?”

#Liz head fade in behind Inco
#Fade out OST

??? “You okay there, new kid?”

#Inco drop sprite

I “Woah!”

#Inco rise sprite

Scal “I just told you not to do that, Lizbeth!”

#Play Liz’s OST (If we don’t have one, make one)

Scal “And you, Mr. GeeNeehToe, are you okay?”

Scal “Didn’t hit your head or anything right?”

“A quick hand check on my scalp shows it’s mostly clean save for

some dirt.”

I “Yeah, I’m fine Ms. Scaler.”

Lizbeth “Ah, sorry about the scare, new kid.”

#Inco turn to Liz

I “No it’s-”

I “Wait, where-”

Lizbeth “Look up, ya goof!”

“Oh.”

“Oh wow.”[ab]

Scal “As I told you earlier, Lizbeth, refrain from sticking your head through the school windows.”

Scal “Consider your safety and come down here now.”

Lizbeth “Yes ma’am.”

#Liz head fade out

“The magical floating head is drawn backwards from the window behind me.”

“Leaving me alone with the principal who looked very frustrated and unapproachable.”

#Liz fade in

“After a few minutes of awkwardly standing around, the mysterious head comes back, this time with a body trailing a good few yards

behind.”

#Liz body fade in

“Ms. Scaler turns to her, her scowl finally softening to a just plain tired expression.”

Scal “It’s the second day, so I’ll let you off with a warning, Ms. Lizbeth.”

“The long-necked girl at least had the decency to look aghast.”

Lizbeth “It won’t happen again, promise!”

“Scaler nods, and seems ready to turn around and go her way when she suddenly stops in her tracks and turns back to look at Lizbeth.”

Scal “Oh, by the way Ms. Lizbeth, are you still available to help out after school with tutoring some of the freshmen?”

Lizbeth “Yes, of course I’m available!”

Scal “Wonderful, please come see me as soon as school is out.”

Lizbeth “Yes Ma’am!”

“With a nod and a smile, the principal walks down the hallway and turns a corner vanishing from sight.”

#scaler fade out

Lizbeth “...”

Lizbeth “Oh great, I forgot that I’m already doing another activity after school…”

Lizbeth "..."

"Wait…"

"I wanted to talk to Ms. Scaler too!"

I "Wait, Principal Scaler!"

#Inco flip and move toward left

#Liz head move to in front of Inco

Lizbeth "Woah! Slow down!"

Lizbeth "She hasn't had her morning coffee yet, definitely not in the mood for trouble right now."

I "But I need to submit this."

"For emphasis I wave my flash drive in front of the long-necked girl's face."

"...Which follows my hand side to side..."

I "The poster said the deadline is today-"

Lizbeth "At the end of the day, so calm down."

"[i]Calm down??[/i] Girl, I am the epitome of calm! I'm so calm I could be on the cover of Monk Monthly!"

I "C'mon, please!"

"The long-necked brachiosaurus rolls her eyes."

I "Please, Lizbeth?"

#change whatever liz's face is in this scene to something akin to "liz head 3" (the irritated one)

Lizbeth "Don't. [i][b]EVER[/i][/b] call me that again."
#maybe make EVER shake? E V E R

"I'm a bit taken aback by the sudden anger in her voice."

I "Well what should I call you, then?"

L "My [i]name[/i] is Liz."

"Oh crap, didn't mean to upset the extremely tall girl."

"I think about how to best try and win the brachiosaurus girl over to my side."

"At first, I consider going with something along the lines of 'right, sorry about that, Liz! Won't happen again!', but I quickly discard that idea."

"The best course should probably be trying to brown-nose my way into some kind of result."

"It's worked before, and it should hopefully work again."

I "Nice to meet you, Liz! Could you please show me how to turn in this contest entry?"

"I shoot her my best puppy dog eyes and hope my plan doesn't explode in my face."

#Show Liz rolling her eyes sprite

Lizbeth "Fiiiiiine."
#change Liz's expression back to normal (with dissolve)

"Well, that worked better than expected."

Liz “Let me show you where the computer lab’s located and how to actually submit your entry…”

“Liz leads me down the hallway, her body taking the lead while her head keeps pace with me, which I can’t help but find a bit odd.”

“I can’t quite pick what my eyes should be focusing on; her body or her head.”

“So instead, I shift my focus back and forth between the two.”

“That seems to be enough to make Liz happy, I guess.”

#fade to black
#Fade back in on a computer lab background
Liz “...and then all you have to do is hit ‘submit’ and the rest should take care of itself.”

“I do exactly as Liz’s head tells me and finish up the last of the process, sending my entry away to be judged.”

“I’m still rather uncertain about such a quickly produced attempt, but hey, it’s the thought that counts.”

“As the page reloads and gives me the confirmation of entry, I let out a sigh and lean back on my seat, relieved to be done with the whole process.”

“As I open my eyes, I’m startled by the fact that Liz’s head is floating right in front of me, only inches away from my nose.”

“Gaah!”

Liz “Oh, sorry, didn’t mean to startle you.”

Liz quickly retracts her head, giving me both space and privacy again.”

Liz “Well, if that’s everything, I should get going to class.”

I “Yeah, that’s all.”

I “Thank you so much for all your help, Liz.”

Liz “Don’t mention it, Inco.”

Liz “You take care of yourself now, new kid.”

“Liz’s body walks out the door, but her head trails behind, her sight still set on mine.”

Liz “If you ever need anything else, don’t hesitate to ask me for help!”

I “Uh… I will.”

Liz “Okay. Bye then!”

“With those words, Liz’s head exits the computer lab, leaving me all alone in the room.”

“I pause for just a few seconds to finalize getting my bearings before letting out a deep breath and truly processing what had just happened.”

“When I’m done doing that, I walk out of the classroom with my chest out and my face lifted high, confident I’m on the right track to starting my new life here.”

“Unfortunately, I don’t get much of a chance to enjoy my small victory, as the bell then rings.”

#SFX Bell Ringing
Bing Bong Bing Bong

“Oh crud, I spent so long submitting my work that I lost track of time!”

“Better get to class before I get marked tardy.”

#fade to black

>>move to converge
>converge point

#fade in to gym, energetic humor music or something like tf2

“Ah, gym class. Where the boys are separated from the men.”

“Where people with herculean physiques are able to impress and show off their sculpted bodies.”

“Where you can well and truly push yourself to your limits and [b]BEYOND.[/b]”

“Where you can-”

??? “[b][i]ALRIGHT MAGGOTS, YOU LISTEN UP[/b][i/]”
#have text shake

“Oh right.”

??? “I WANT [b][i]ALL[b][i] OF YOU TO DROP AND GIVE ME [b][i] TWENTY[b][i], RIGHT HERE RIGHT NOW!”
#text shake

??? “HURRY IT UP! I WANNA SEE ELBOWS AND ASSES!”
#text shake

“I drop to the floor, already beginning to sweat. Jeez Louise, it’s hot in here.”

“Minutes in, my body is crying, screaming, and yelling in agony. Muscles I didn’t even know I had yearn for the sweet release of

death.”

#“I look up and to the right, lo, behold! Surely the clock, who metes out the allocated time of punishment, will be my savior!”

#“...”

#“...”

#“It’s only been ten minutes.”

“... I’m more out of shape than I thought.”

Coach “ALRIGHT GET UP, YOU PIECES OF HUMANOID FILTH!”

“This gym teacher… I’ve never seen someone so brutal! There’s no way he’s human.”

“Well, at least not modern human.”

“I struggle to move myself up on hands and knees that sing a dirge of pain yet to come.”

“My sweaty palms cause me to slip and tumble back onto the floor, my chin impacting the ground.”

“Out of the corner of my eye, I see a reddish hand reach down…”

??? “Bro, he said get up, not get down.”
#fade in inco on right facing left, and damien on left facing right

“I try not to stare at the quivering fleshy frills on his neck and instead focus on pushing myself back up.”

I “Y-yeah, hard of hearing, I guess…”

??? “Sorry to hear. I’m Damien, by the way.”

Coach [i][b]”WHAT IS THE HOLD UP!”[/b][/i]

“Before I can reply with my name, the very disgruntled teacher makes his dominating presence known by power walking straight through the other tired classmates to us both.”

Coach [i][b]”YOU TWO! CHROMEDOME AND THE FRILLY ONE!”[/b][/i]

I “Uh…”

Da “Pssst, I think he means us.”

Coach [i][b]”OF COURSE I MEAN YOU TWO!”[/b][/i]

Coach [i][b]”CERTAINLY AIN’T TALKIN’ TO MY STAR ATHLETE!”[/b][/i]

“On the bleachers, Mia sits up and flashes a thumbs up to the coach, who returns it with his own overly hair digit.”

Coach [i][b]”I AM REFERRING TO THE VERY OBVIOUS RIFFRAFF OF MY CLASS”[/b][/i]

Coach “WHO TOLD YOU THAT YOU HAVE TIME TO TALK?!”[/b][/i]

Coach “[i][b]DOES MY CLASSROOM LOOK LIKE A DEBATE STAGE, SON?![/b][/i]”

Da “I mean, maybe if we got some of those stands from the auditorium.”

Da “Oh! And I know a guy’s uncle that could make a really classy podium!”

“What is this guy thinking?! The coach looks like he’s about to explode!”

Coach [i][b]”DO NOT PLAY SMART WITH ME, SON! I WANT YOU ON THAT

TRACK FIELD NOW.”[/b][/i]

Da “But didn’t you want it to be a stage?”

Coach [i][b]”NOW!”[/b][/i]
#Make the letters shake here as well

“The coach leaves, growling under his breath.”

“Damien just smiles, as if we aren’t about to be put through even more torture.”

I “Way to go, Damien.”

“The frilled neck dino smiles and raises a thumb."

Da “No prob, Bob.”
#damienhappy with dissolve

#quickly slide in coach solly (angry?) from the right. I mean QUICK, like FNAF jumpscare quick

??? “AAAAAAALRIGHT, LADIES! SOUND OFF LIKE YOU GOT A PAIR!”
#have damien and inco “jump” up with shock, flip inco so he’s facing the same direction as damien (facing right), and lastly slide both of them to the left.

Damien & Inco “YES, COACH SOLLY!”

Coach “I WANT EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU BOOTLICKS TO GIMME FORTY LAPS!”

Coach “[b][i] N O W [/b][/i]”
#shake text
#Have inco and ben’s sprites run and bob back and forth, off and on screen

“Mia barrels from the back of the group to the front with impressive speed.”

D “Wow, I always thought duckbills were just fast swimmers.”

M “Cram it, Damien.”

“She kicks up a few pebbles behind her into our faces.”

I “Gah! Damien, you know her?”

D “She borrows my dumbbells sometimes.”

D “Usually when hers break or get stolen.”
“The coach jogs up to us, his glare making our jaws snap shut.”

Coach “That’s what I thought. Now get in single file line.”

“While Mia sprints alone around the track the rest of us make a disorderly line before the raging monkey.”

Coach “ALRIGHT LADIES, WE WILL BE DOING A FORTY LAP INDIAN RUN.”

Coach “AND I WANNA HEAR THAT CADENCE LOUD AND CLEAR!!”

Class “Yes coach!”

Coach “LOUDER!”

Class “YES COACH!”

“I thought it would be an easy paced jog, but that wasn’t good enough for the cantankerous couch.”

Coach “I WENT A WORKIN FOR UN-CLE SAM!”

Class “I WENT A WORKING FOR UNCLE SAM”

Coach “GONNA MAKE ME THE BEST I AM”

Class “GONNA MAKE ME THE BEST I AM”

“That doesn't… sound grammatically correct.”

Coach “GO ON AND PIN MAH MEDALS TO MAH CHEST”

Class “GO ON AND PIN MY MEDALS TO MY CHEST”

Coach “TELL DEAR OLD MOM I DONE MAH BEST”

Class “TELL DEAR OLD MOM I DONE MY BEST”
#fade to black

“This continued for what felt like hours.”

“I don’t think I’m going to last another day in this class… never mind the service.”

“I think I see spots in my vision. That can’t be good.”

“Hopefully my next class isn’t as [i]’eventful’[/i]”

“Sweet mercy, the teacher just goes on and on…”

Coach “I DON’T KNOW BUT I’VE BEEN TOLD, ESKIMO-”

#kill soundtrack
#pause to signify time has passed

#fade to secondfloorhallway, casual music

“I’m left shambling like a zombie through the halls of St. Hammond.”

“On the plus side, my body has gone completely numb, leaving me immune to muscle pains.”

“...On the minus side, I can barely move.”

“My next scheduled class is AP Art Design, so at least I’ll have a chance to rest.”

“It took me an uncomfortably long time to limp from the gymnasium to this studio classroom on the second floor.”

“I barely step foot inside before the bell rings.”

#show iadakanclassroombgnamefuck

“As to be expected, nearly every seat in the room is already filled by a dinosaur.”

“While many of the students look well-prepared, some are clearly ready to fall asleep within the next few minutes.”

“Eventually, though, I notice a pair of eyes staring intently at me.”

#show iadakan

“Based on his outfit, I assume that’s our art teacher.”

“Somehow, he looks like he’s young and old at the same time.”

“...Shoot, I guess I’m holding the class up.”

“Though, to be honest, the teacher doesn’t look like he’s in any kind of a hurry.

“Trying not to get on his bad side, I take the seat closest to me in the front row.”

“Even with me sitting down, the art teacher still continues to idle, instead staring at the class body with a hazy stare.”

“Nobody else seems to be paying attention to him, save for a few students here and there.”

“But suddenly, he raises both of his hands and slams them firmly on the surface of his desk, the sound of wood echoing through the room.”

“The entire class body turns its head towards the noise, all conversation stopped in its tracks.”

“...rather than look angry, though, the art teacher has a massive grin on his face.”

Iad “Right then!”

“The pale pterodactyl holds what looks to be a metallic tray on a stick.”

Iad “Good morning class!

#Flash white

“Thank you Raptor Jesus, for forcing me to wear prescription shades.”

“My classmates are all wincing in pain and wiping at their eyes.”

Iad “...and welcome to AP Art Design!”

“He holds up the stick haphazardly.”

Iad “This is a flash-pan.”

Iad “Saw it at an antique store yesterday, thought it’d be a good introduction.”

Iad “It’s not important. Worthless, actually!”

“The class winces as the stick is chucked into the garbage bin and shattered.”

Iad “Excuse my absence yesterday, I had matters to take care of elsewhere.”

Iad “My name is Mr. Iadakan!”

#show iadakan-penraised

“Within the blink of the eye the teacher has replaced the sun-on-a-stick with a fancy marker and managed to scrawl his name across the board in the finest show of penmanship.”

Iad “And I shall be your guide as we explore the expanse of the creative world!”

// I’m probably not getting Iadakan right but we’ll figure it out later //

Iad “Let’s not dilly-dally then, shall we?”

Iad “This first week, we’ll be going in-depth on the history of the fundamentals of art! Perhaps a little trial by fire as well, to get your creative juices flowing!”

“For a teacher he’s very… animated.”

#Door slamming noise, Olivia comes in

??? “I’M ON TIME THIS TIME!”

Iad “Yes, of course you are.”

“I would think that the loud noise and the entrance of a wheelchair bound crocodile would have startled everyone but…”

“I take a look around the room to gauge everybody else.”

“To my surprise, at least half of the students that were ready to sleep seem to be instinctually paying attention.”

Iad “If you’d be so kind to find your spot. The lesson was just starting.”

??? “Okay.”

“The mean green wheelie machine rolls herself to the chairless open spot right next to me.”

“I can only assume that my classmates are used to her antics too.”

“I can also pick out smirks from several of the clearly prepared students. They’ve probably had Mr. Iadakan’s classes before, as they all seem ready to take notes.”

“Even the green-scaled semi-truck beside me is already writing, even though Mr. Iadakan hasn’t even said anything yet.

“Guess I should get started.”

“I reach for my backpack, struggling to take out one of my spiral notebooks and prepare for the lecture.”

“...”
#maybe darken the screen borders a little for dramatic effect?

“Wait.”

“Time seems to freeze, like I’m in one of those bad TV sitcoms.”

“I turn my head back towards the green-skinned dinosaur beside me.”

#show inco left
#show olivia left
#move iadakan’s fat ass to the right side of the screen (or

delete him entirely, either works?)
#Olivia theme

“That face…”

“...!”

“That’s her!”

“That dinosaur was the one that nearly committed vehicular Incocide.”

#feel free to delete, reword or add whatever you’d like

“Should I say something to her?”

“I’ll come up with something smart, I just know it. Some witty, off the cuff remark that will catch her off guard.”

“...”

“No… that’s probably not a good idea. I should probably just stay quiet and not bring it up.”

#show olivia lookback

??? "Hey."

“But what if it is? Maybe I can just say something in a non-threatening way?”

??? "You want to take a picture or something?"

“Could be a great opener for a conversation. Heh, years down the road at the barbecue it’ll be a-”

##jostle screen, remove darkened border, flip Olivia to face Inco

“Agh!”

??? “I said, what the hell are you staring at?!”

“I now realize I never took my eyes off of her for the last minute or so.”

“Apparently she had been trying to get my attention, too…”

I “H-huh?”

“Oh great, perfect response.”

#change to olivia angry

??? “So you were! You fuckin’ cheater!”

I “No! I wasn’t cheating, I swear!”

??? “Then what [i]were[/i] you doing?”

“She’s got me there.”

I “I thought you looked familiar, that’s all.”

??? “... that’s the lamest excuse I’ve ever heard.”

I “It’s all I’ve got, sorry.”

??? “Whatever. Keep your eyes on your own damn paper..”

I barely catch the next part.

??? "Bad enough I have the rest of these people to deal with…"

Iad “a-HEM”

#flip olivia facing her original position

Iad “Are you two done having a conversation now?”

“My face burns with the force of a thousand suns.”

Inco & Olivia “Y-yes, Mr. Iadakan.”

#pause
Iad “Anyways, as I was saying, …”

#fade out Inco and Olivia

“I keep my eyes firmly glued to the spot in front of me for the rest of the class.”

“Well, so much for a good first impression. Then again, why would I want to be friends with her anyways?”

“The teacher, never ceasing in his bombastic behavior, makes learning about even the most mundane art history feel exciting.”

“His explanation and use of the vintage flash-pan certainly woke us up.”

“It’s clear he has a real passion for this subject. I wish more teachers could be like that.”

“Soon enough, the class bell rings and we’re dismissed from our seats.”

Iad “Mr. Nito, could I speak with you for a moment?”

“Well, most of the class is dismissed.”

#fade in Iadakan on the right

#slide in inco from the left, facing right, to about the middle

I “Yes sir?”

“I already know what this is about.”

Iad “About your exchange with Olivia earlier…”

“Knew it.”

“Also wait, that’s her name?”

I “Sorry for interrupting the class, sir, it won’t happen ag-”

Iad “Actually, I was going to apologize to you.”

“[i]What[/i]”

Iad “You’re right, Olivia was the one who ran into you in the hall.”

Iad “She has a… habit… of doing that lately.”

I “I see.”

Iad “She’s a very bright girl, she’s just been going through a rough patch lately.”

Iad “Please, don’t hold it against her.”

“Do you hear yourself right now? She almost RAN ME OVER!”

“... [i]sigh[/i]”

“I’m not inclined to be merciful on her, but I guess he does have

a point. I don’t have to like it though.”

I “I guess.”

“The way he looks at me as I say that… is he disappointed?”

Iad "Look, Inco…"

The ptero teacher runs a hand through his hair, carefully avoiding his dorsal frill.

Iad "All I ask is that you give her a chance."

Iad "She's still learning to define who she is."

Iad "Not all of us know who we really are, and Olivia is… still figuring it out."

Iad “Anyways, that’s all I wanted to say. Don’t mean to keep you from your classes.”

“He waves me off, and I feel inclined to wave back.”[ac]

“...”

“After another photography class with Ben, lunch rolls around again.”

“Ben’s a great guy to eat lunch with and all, but…”

“That friend of his really rubs me the wrong way.”

“Sure she’s abrasive and all, but even then…”

“Can’t really put my finger on it.”

“Either way, I’m rethinking wanting to stick around the two of them for lunch.”

“I stop to kick myself for even considering ditching the only person here that I’ve been able to somewhat relax around.”

“Wait, it’s only the second day.”

“Why am I acting as though it’s ‘too late’ for anything?”

“...”

“Who am I kidding, I should just go to-”

D “Yooo, Inco!”

“I’m shoulder checked from behind by what feels like an oversized fist or undersized boulder.”

“If I weren’t already by a wall I would have either been sent sprawling or made into roadkill again.”

“When I turn about it’s to see the toothy grin of the weird guy from gym class.”

I “OW- Wh- What?”

D “What, already forgot about me?”

D “You don’t got anywhere to be right?”

I “I, uhh… Yea-”

D “Nice, you hesitated!”

D “Alright come on, you gotta see something.”

"... May as well, right?"

"Damien excitedly motions at me to follow through the traffic of students going about the lunchroom."

"Peering in through the crowd, waving me over, and disappearing again like he's outrunning something."

"It's a good thing I hadn't gotten my own lunch yet, it'd be dumped on the ground about three elbows and a slap ago."

"Through the clamoring I hear something about a turf war restarting with the new year, and that Megalodons will continue to rule." [rewrite to be funnier]

"Place is an actual warzone now. How on earth is Damein able to weave through these guys so easy?"

"Eventually he leads me to the far corner of the room, and to his usual lunch table."

D "Hey, you made it through in one piece!"

I "I think one of my ribs is cracked…"

D "Great, you'll fit in in no time!"

"Oog…"

D "Alright, lemme introduce you to everyone…"

"Damien rolls up a napkin and throws it at a nearby tree."

>>if inco has met liz

"The tree winces in response."

“A familiar face looms in from the ceiling, munching on something. I only just now notice the ceiling is cluttered with the flora around the rest of the school.”

L “Damien, I nearly choked!”

L “Oh, hey, you’re that new guy!”

L “Inco, was it?”

“I’ll never get used to seeing this.”

I “Yeah, good to see you again, too.”

L “Sorry, did Damien drag you over here for something?”

I “Yeah, something I ‘had’ to see.”

D “Whoa, you two know each other already?”

D “Alright, great!”

>>if inco has not met liz

“The tree winces in response.”

I “What the?!”

“I’ve read about these guys and seen them online, but…”

“Up close, this is crazy surreal…”

“I need to keep it cool, don’t overreact.”

“Out of the corner of my eye I see Damien closely monitoring my

reaction.”

“Clearly, introducing people to her is one of Damien’s hobbies.”

??? “Damien, I nearly choked!”

??? “Oh, wow. New guy. Hey there!”

I “Uh, hi!”

??? “You’re new, right? Wait, of course you are, I’m silly.”

??? “Nice to see another human around the campus!”

L “I’m Liz.”

I “Thanks, I-”

D “Hey, you see her neck is huge, right?”

I “...”

L “Oh, god, Damien…”

D “She’s weird!”

“Liz’s hand feels blindly around her. Is she looking for something to throw?”

“She gives up and just bonks Damien on the head with her chin.”

“Guess he got what he wanted.”

D “Alright, now that you two have met…”

>>moving on

D “That’s all I had!”

L “Damn it, Damien…”

I “That was it?”

D “Yeah!”

D “You can go get lunch now.”

“Oh man, I’m gonna run out of time to eat at this rate.”

“I leer over into the crowd of lunch-goers.”

“There’s no way I’m going back in there.”

??? “Vending machines.”

“Hm?”

“I turn to the voice.”

“Hey, it’s that chick that tried to run me over yesterday!”

??? “Vending machines. Behind us. Just around the corner.”

D “Whoa, Olivia!”

D “You have functioning vocal chords again!”

“She goes back to picking at her bag of chips.”

I “What was that about?”

L “Uh, just outside there’s the school vendors.”

L “Not very healthy, but hey, what here is.”

I “Huh. I’ll check them out.”

“I leave the group behind to go try and get lunch.”

“Not a fan of soda and chips for a meal, but if it’s either that or getting trampled…”

“Hey, this thing accepts credit cards. Handy.”

“I pick out a few brands I recognize, enough to tide me over for the day.”

“I bend to pick up the bags from the dispenser slot and…”

“... That green chick’s looking at me.”

“She notices I noticed and hunches over again hurriedly.”

“What’s that all about?”

“...”

“Right, making new friends.”

“I buy a few extra sodas for the table.”

“Carrying everything back in both arms, I dump everything at an empty spot and slide a can of soda to Damien and Liz.”

“Liz doesn’t notice, she’s back up in the rafters finishing her meal.”

“Damien though, looks like I just tossed him a gold bar.”

D “WHOA, DUDE!”

"Instead of drinking it normally, Damien pierces the bottom of the can with a fang while popping the drop."

"In seconds, he finishes the entire can."

D "Ahh, just what I needed."

L "You've had three already."

"Damien gives Liz a grin."

D "Yeah, but like, it had been an hour since my last one, so I was starting to slow down, and besides Inco gave it to me for FREE and…"

“While he goes on and on, I turn to the last person at the table.”

“Damien and Idakan called her Olivia, right?”

“I slide her the last can. It bumps against her arm, and she looks up.”

I "Hey, Olivia, here.”

I “On me."

"My welcoming smile is met with cold indifference."

"Olivia just stares at the can, like it's just dropped down from outer space."

"Her look is… complex. For a second, I think I see something approaching an emotion flash in her eyes."

"Maybe surprise, maybe anger, I'm not sure…"

"But then, the moment passes, and Olivia returns back to the frosty peeks from whence she came."

O "...No thanks."

O "Not thirsty anymore."

"Olivia grabs her paltry lunch before wheeling herself away."

"Sheesh, what was that about?"

"All I did was try and give her a soda."

"From the way she looked at that can, you'd think I suggested she try to chung that soda like Damien."

D "Yougonnafinishthat?"

"Speak of Spinosaurus Satan, and he shall appear…"

"Damien barely waits for me to nod before scooping Olivia's soda up."

I "At least someone can use it."

L "Look, Inco, don't let it bother you."

"Liz's head descends from the rafters."

L "She's just…."

"So cold that mercury freezes?"

L "Difficult?"

"Liz rolls her eyes with a sigh."

L "At least that's what Damien says."

"There's something in Liz's voice that makes me think her and Damien have had this conversation before, many times."

"Before I can comment, Damien looks up from his second shotgunned soda."

D "Someone say my name?"

D "Sorry, it's hard to hear on account of my head, like, buzzing or something."

D "Probably all the studying I did this morning or something."

"I can feel Liz's exasperation from here."

L "Raptor Jesus, give me strength…"

L "Look, I've got to go to my Dino Education Club of America meeting."

L "Can you guys, like, not OD on caffeine before I get back?"

"Damien follows Liz with a worried expression as the long-necked lady leaves the lunch room."

D "Wait, is that a thing?!"

"And with Liz gone, he turns to me."

D "Ohmygawd Inco am I gonna DIE?!"

"I look at the cans littering the floor around our table."

"There's got to be a dozen or more down there…"

"..."

I "N-no?"

"Damien relaxes instantly."

D "Whew! Knew it the whole time."

"I'm interrupted by the bell, signaling the end of lunch."

D "Anyways, Inco, I'mma go see if I can find some more food. You wanna come with?"

I "What about class though?"

D "It’s fine my guy, Ms. Pollock said as long as I have a pass I’m fine, plus I’m hungry right now.”

“He grins and flashes an excessively wrinkled and sunbleached sheet of paper.”

I “This is dated from last yea-”

D “Anyway, see you later man!”

“He swipes the paper back from my hands.”

"I manage to survive Damien's attempt to crush my ribcage, also known to normal people as a 'hug', before he sprints back into

the melee of the lunch room."

"And as I attract another chorus of would-be paparazzi peers on my way out of the cafeteria, I'm reminded that there's nothing normal about a human kid going to a dino school…"

"..."

"Let's see, up next is History."

"I manage to find a spot near the front of the class, acknowledging the hoots and catcalls of the rest of the class with a pained smile."

"Seems like my popularity hasn't run out yet…"

"I wonder what part of history we'll learn about today."

"Ancient ruins, perhaps?"

"Old tools and arrowhead knives cut from rocks?"

"I wonder if I could use any of that to boost my social standing. Reconnect with my roots, so to speak."

"As I ponder the possibilities, one more student slips into the class."

"Wait, isn't that Olivia? How'd I miss her on the first day?"

"Come to think of it, she wasn't in Art class that day either…"

"She rolls herself across the room, silently dumping her bag onto the desk in front of me."

"Guess I should've known that's where she would sit, given it's a handicapped seat and all…"

"I can hear a murmur from the class behind me and see several students point in her direction."

"...Olivia ignores them all."

“During lunch she was kinda silent but at least looked alive.”

“Unlike now, looking nearly catatonic to the world.”

"Eyes and head down, hands stuffed into her jacket. It's like she's shutting out the whole world."

"The muffled whispering is silenced by the bell."

"Hmm, still no sign of Mister-"

Trig "Sorry y'all!"

Trig "I was just… preoccupied with somethin'."

"Mr. Triggums absently scrubs a finger underneath his nose."

Trig "Alright, if y'all could open your textbooks to page ten, we can get started on today's lecture."

"As Mr. Triggums turns to the blackboard, I toss Olivia one more glance."

"She hasn't even bothered to open her textbook…"

"I mean, she's taking notes at least."

"...I {i}think{/i} those’re notes."

“Well, I don’t want a repeat of what happened in art class, but…”

“I crane my neck a bit, risking a quick peek at what Olivia’s writing down in her notebook.”

“Wait, this isn’t writing at all!”

“Her page is covered with aimless scribblings that seem solely designed to take up space and keep the hand busy with idle musings.”

“I quickly look back to my own book before Olivia can notice me staring.”

“During art, the only time she took her eyes off Mr. Iadakan was to call me a creep.”

“Does she just not like history? I mean, I don’t like a lot of subjects, but I don’t think I look like that.”

“Maybe she’s just tired or something.”

Trig “Aight class, Instructions are on the board. I want the work done by the end of the period.”

Trig “Now, if none y'all mind…”

“And with those words, Mr. Triggums once again stepped out of the room, all the while sniffling loudly.”

“And… moistly…”

“Raptor Jesus just hearing it makes my own nose itch. I hope he doesn’t have something infectious.”

“As if on cue, the split second the sniffly teacher stepped out the silence of ‘study time’ erupted into loud chatter and gossip.”

“While some of them got to work, everyone else idly chatted with

one another like the situation was absolutely normal."

"I find myself once more looking at Olivia, my curiosity piqued at what she'll do without a teacher to scold her around."

"With all the grace of a sloth, Olivia pulls out some well worn headphones from her pocket and lays her head atop her impromptu-pillow textbook."

"A part of me thought to reach out and ask the drowsy gator girl if she was feeling okay."

"I mean, that book did not look comfortable at all."

"But I stop myself."

"The last good deed I did for her was turned down without so much as a polite thank you."

"Forget it, I'm probably overthinking this."

"She's probably tired from pushing her wheelchair around."

"I should really focus on my work."

#fade to black

"The busywork that Mr. Triggums gave us doesn't take very long to complete."

"Time to employ my favorite time-wasting strategy."

"I check up on my favorite blogs while I wait for class to end."

"I look around at the rest of the students, and it looks like they have similar ideas."

“. . .” (this line has a much lower speed)

“[i]RIIIIIIIING[/i]

“Finally.”

#show hallway

“Despite how chaotic the halls get at the end of the day, I get through them without much trouble.”

“Only three dinosaurs ask if they can feel my skin this time.”

“I’m not sure if I should take that sort of thing as a compliment, though.”

“I leave through a set of side doors, hoping to avoid the worst of the after-school crowds.”

#show outside-school (adjust where this takes places as needed, dunno what we have rn)
(tarmac because olibia can’t roll on field dumb stupid gator)

D “Yo!”

B “Inco!”

“On the flattop behind the school I’m met by both the blue parasaur and pink dilophasaur.”

D “Hey, Inco, you gotta play with us bro!”

I “Play? Play what?”

B “The student council thought that hosting some after school sports for fun would help students burn off stress, so today we’re running a game of dodgeball.”

D “Yeah and like, the teams aren’t even right now, we just need one more so I figured why not invite my new bestest buddy?”

B “Indeed, it’d be great to have you join us and make some more co- friends.”

“But dodgeball? In this heat?”

“I look towards the small crowd, some of the teens there looking impatiently at me.”

“Well, I don’t want to disappoint anyone.”

“And plus I don’t have anything better to do.”

I “Sure, I’ll join.”

B “Fantastic!”

B “C’mon, we can start picking teams now.”

D “Ah yeah, Team Damien is gonna whoop your blue behind!”

B “Careful Damien, hubris always comes before the fall.”

D “Ah sweet, you brought some post-game soup too?”

B “Hubris, not hot bisque, Damien.”

“The two keep talking as I join the crowd.”

“I make out a couple familiar faces.”

“Even Olivia is among the group, though she doesn’t seem too excited.”

“Damien and Ben stand in front of us, no doubt preparing to select teams.”

B “I’ll pick first, to start things off.”

“The parasaur’s eyes scan the crowd, though his expression implies he’s already made a decision.”

“Eventually, they stop on a certain green-scaled girl.”

B “Olivia! Why don’t you join my team?”

“The crowd falls eerily silent as the sound of wheels against asphalt echoes around us.”

“Without a word, the gator wheels her way beside Ben, though she intentionally puts a bit of distance between the two.”

“While she looks upset, Olivia doesn’t look surprised in the least.”

“Damien’s up next, and he doesn’t even pretend to think.”

D “Inco, my humie! Get up here!”

“Guess I should’ve expected that.”

“For some reason, several people in the crowd look shocked, glancing at me and whispering among themselves.”

“Maybe they wanted me on the other team?”

“I take a few steps forward, standing on the side of Team Damien.”
#fade to black

“It only takes a few minutes for the rest of the players to be placed on a team.”

“Ben’s team is composed of preppy students and bulky athletes, with Olivia being the odd one out.

“Meanwhile, Damien mentioned he chose our team based on their ‘vibes’.”

“”It’s pretty obvious the odds are stacked against us, and the dinos on our team already look reluctant to play.”

“But before anybody has the time to back out, it looks like they’re done setting up the balls.”

“Both teams face each other, staring awkwardly as they wait for the game to start.”

“[i] TWEEEEEEEEEEEE! [/i]”

“The sound of a whistle breaks the silence, and all hell breaks loose.”

“Damien’s the first to race out from our group.”

“He manages to grab two balls before Ben’s team is able to grab the remaining four.”

“He somehow manages to avoid getting pelted by a pair of them on the way back.”

“The rubber missiles instead tag two of our teammates, putting us in an even worse situation than before.”

D “Woo! Those balls flew a little too close for comfort!”

D “I mean, did you see how close they came to my head!?”

“I glance at the two other guys that got knocked out, who are in turn glaring at Damien.”

“I don’t think they appreciated getting used as targets while Damien basically came out unscathed.”

“Before I can really think about it some more, Damien tosses me one of the balls he managed to snatch from the middle of the field.”

“I give him a quizzical look.”

D “You’ve played dodgeball before, right?”

“As Damien poses the question, he tosses his ball to one of our other team members, who manages a knockout pretty easily.”

D “Focus bro!”

D “As long as I’m dodgin’ and catchin’ we need everyone else trying to score hits!”

“As he says that, he ducks just as another of the opposing team’s balls flies in his direction.”

“His last second dodge saves his hide, but it allows another one of our teammates to get knocked out of the game.”

“Once again, the student who got knocked out glared at Damien, who in turn didn’t seem to notice the nasty look at all.”

“I’m starting to wonder if Damien is some kind of dodgeball savant…”

“I look down at the ball still in my hand and decide to do something other than standing around doing my best impersonation of a statue.”

“I look down the court and single out a target.”

“A purple pterosaur on the enemy team haphazardly mulls about the tarmac.”

“No doubt they’re only here because Ben asked.”

“I wind up my best throw, chucking the rubber missile at their body.”

“By only a few inches, the ball soars past their shoulder, and my attempt is met with a scoff and an offended glare.”

“I was never very good at sports anyway.”

“My attention is ripped as I spot an empty-handed Ben jogging over towards me, watching the rest of the players while remaining within talking distance.

B “Inco! You have to overload the front liners!”

I “Huh?”

“Ben points towards Damien, and I turn my head towards him.”

“The dilophasaur is dodging and catching balls left and right, but it looks like he’s starting to work up a sweat.”

“I turn back to Ben, but it looks like he’s re-entered the fray.”

“Now that I think about it, that is a good strategy.”

“Except I don’t have much time to think at all, barely avoiding a red rubber missile hurtling towards me.”

“I look around the court for any stray balls.”

D “Heads up, Inco!”

“Damien kicks a ball destined for him up into the air, which bounces on the tarmac and in my direction.”

“I catch the ball, looking out towards the enemy team.”

“A muscular triceratops looks to be the Damien of the enemy team, pulling off similar dodges and catches.”

“On the edge of the tarmac, though.

“Oh. I forgot she was even playing.”

“Olivia is wheeling around the edges of the field, stopping to grab a ball from the ground.”

“She doesn’t seem especially interested in the game, instead staring towards Ben with a predatory grin gracing her maw.”

“Olivia hurls the red ball towards the parasaur, which barely misses him. ”

“It does cause Ben to shriek in surprise, though, and he’s not exactly in a position to find the culprit.”

“Looking back, Olivia looks surprisingly content with her sabotage.”

“..It’d be a [i]really[/i] easy shot with how distracted she is.”

“And the sooner I get rid of this ball, the sooner I can take the pressure off Damien by catching another.”

“Wait- she’s looking over here!”

>>Take the shot at Olivia
>>Take the shot at the Triceratops

>>Take the shot at Olivia

“Without thought, I wind up the ball and throw it straight at Olivia.”

“She barely reacts to the ball, looking completely awestruck as it flies towards her.”

“That is, until it impacts her directly on the snout with a soft [i]PLUNK[/i].”

“That wasn’t my intended target, and a wave of guilt immediately washes over me.”

“Olivia gasps, placing a hand on her snout for a few moments..”

“It doesn’t look like she was too hurt by the impact..”

“..but, if her face has anything to say, I don’t think she’s too happy about it.”

“I-In fact, she looks pretty mad..”

“The green-scaled dino grabs the ball that rests in her lap, rearing an arm up and–”

“--OH SHIT!”

#cut to black

“[i]PKUNK![/i]”

#sound effect??

#Kill the music

“...”

“...Ow…”

"..."

"Wow… I can't feel my face."

"I blink a few times to try and get my vision to stop spinning."

"The sky's also a heck of a lot brighter than I remember…"

#Play goofy music

"Instinctively, I put a hand on my forehead in an attempt to shield my eyes from the harsh rays of the sun."

"I guess I lost my shades."

"I don't think I've ever been outside without glasses on… or inside, for that matter."

"As my vision starts to settle back in place, I glance around to try and get my bearings."

"I'm hopeful that Olivia's hit didn't break my nose or anything."

"It doesn't look like there's any blood anywhere."

"I do spot what's left of my sunglasses, though."

"The plastic frames shatter into a dozen pieces with just a touch."

"Good thing I bought so many pairs…"

B "Inco! Quick, how many tails do I have!"

"The spindly tip of a tail waves in front of my face."

I “Err, this isn’t yours, I don’t think so at least?”

L “Okay you pass the test.”

“Is that Liz’s voice?”

“Where did she come from?”

“A crowd of bodies circle me now, I think the game is over at this point.”

D “Whoa, dude, I’ve seen some balls to the face, but never seen anyone get knocked out like you!”

D “You gonna be okay?”

I “Y-yeah. Just a lil’ dizzy right now.”

“The brightness certainly isn’t helping.”

B “Ah, your sunglasses…”

B “Those weren’t prescriptions, right?”

“I feel the world finally start to settle, giving me the chance to sit up and readjust to reality.”

I “It’s fine, I always carry spares in my backpack anyway.”

“Once I’m back on my feet, someone is kind enough to hand me my bag.”

O “This one, right?”

“My spare pair is a little dusty, but they’ll work ‘til I get

home and clean them off..”

I “Yeah, Thank you.”

“The crowd starts to disperse, everyone chattering and laughing about what just happened to me.”

“I’d feel more embarrassed, but I just wanna sit down.”

B “Sheesh Olivia, you should be more careful.”

B “You know you’ve got way more upper-body strength then anyone else here.”

“Huh?”

“I look to the person who handed me my backpack, and see a scornful gator girl currently growling in her wheelchair.”

Play introspective music

B “You should apologize to Inco, Olivia.”

B “You’re lucky he isn’t seriously hurt.”

I “Ah, no, it’s fine, Ben.”

I “It’s my fault to begin with.”

“I turn fully to Olivia, trying to my words so I don’t come across as a jerk.”

I “I uh… I wasn’t purposely targeting you, Olivia.”

I “And I didn’t mean to hit you in the face. Sorry.”

“She looks surprised at first, as if she expected me to say something else.”

“Finally her mouth settles in a small frown, and she nods in response.”

O “Yeah… same…”

O “Don’t take it personally.”

O “I was just… upset...”

"Olivia gives me a lingering look, almost like she was… looking for something else to say?"

"After a while, the smallest hint of a smile cracks across her face."

"I guess whatever she was looking at me for went over well."

“She wheels her chair around, beginning to distance herself from Ben and I.”

#olivia lookback?

O “...Good shot, Inco.”

O “That was fun.”

“And with those words she departs from the court, probably to head home.”

“Damien catches up to her, and I can see him talking a mile a minute at her.”

“And yet while Damien talks her ear off, I swear I can see her looking back towards me.”

“Hmm…”

“...”

>>Converges into Chapter 3

Well actually what we should do is have two separate divergences for the sake of efficiency :^)

>>Take the shot at the Triceratops

“Nah, she’s hardly participating, anyway.”

“Besides, I don’t want to be known as the jerk that targets people with disabilities.”

“Looking back to the opposing team’s front-liner, I wind up the ball and hurl it straight at him!”

“..but at the last second, he deflects the ball with another he caught seconds prior.”

“I can only grumble in response.”

“Looks like I’ll have to wait for someone to miss Damien again.”

“I look over the enemy team, searching for someone with a ball.”

“My gaze lingers on a certain wheelchair-bound girl that looks poised to throw.”

“..but it looks like she’s staring daggers right at me.”

“The green-scaled girl grabs the ball that rests in her lap, rearing an arm up and–”

"--OH SHIT!"

#cut to black

"[i]PKUNK![/i]"

#sound effect??

#Kill the music

"..."

"...Ow…"

"..."

"Wow… I can't feel my face."

"I blink a few times to try and get my vision to stop spinning."

"The sky's also a heck of a lot brighter than I remember…"

#Play goofy music

"Instinctively, I put a hand on my forehead in an attempt to shield my eyes from the harsh rays of the sun."

"I guess I lost my shades."

"I don't think I've ever been outside without glasses on… or inside, for that matter."

"As my vision starts to settle back in place, I glance around to try and get my bearings."

"I'm hopeful that Olivia's hit didn't break my nose or anything."

“It doesn’t look like there’s any blood anywhere.”

“I do spot what’s left of my sunglasses, though.”

“The plastic frames shatter into a dozen pieces with just a touch.”

“Good thing I bought so many pairs…”

B “Inco! Quick, how many tails do I have!”

“The spindly tip of a tail waves in front of my face.”

I “Err, this isn’t yours, I don’t think so at least?”

L “Okay you pass the test.”

“Is that Liz’s voice?”

“Where did she come from?”

“A crowd of bodies circle me now, I think the game is over at this point.”

D “Whoa, dude, I’ve seen some balls to the face, but never seen anyone get knocked out like you!”

D “You gonna be okay?”

I “Y-yeah. Just a lil’ dizzy right now.”

“The brightness certainly isn’t helping.”

B “Ah, your sunglasses…”

B “Those weren’t prescriptions, right?”

“I feel the world finally start to settle, giving me the chance to sit up and readjust to reality.”

I “It’s fine, I always carry spares in my backpack anyway.”

“Once I’m back on my feet, someone is kind enough to hand me my bag.”

O “This one, right?”

“My spare pair is a little dusty, but they’ll work ‘til I get home and clean them off..”

I “Yeah, Thank you.”

“The crowd starts to disperse, everyone chattering and laughing about what just happened to me.”

“I’d feel more embarrassed, but I just wanna sit down.”

B “Sheesh Olivia, you should be more careful.”

B “You know you’ve got way more upper-body strength then anyone else here.”

“Huh?”

“I look to the person who handed me my backpack, and see a scornful gator girl currently growling in her wheelchair.”

B “You should apologize to Inco, Olivia.”

#Play serious/high-alert music

O “Apologize for what?”

O “He’s a human.

O “He can take it.”

B “It’s not about whether or not he can or cannot take it.”

B “You hit him in the face, which is against the rules of the game.”

B “How many times do I have to keep reminding you that you can’t just break the rules whenever you feel like it?”

“Olivia’s glare at Ben shifts over to me, but she begins to look apprehensive.”

B “Here Inco, let me help you up.”

“Ben extends a hand down to me, which I happily take to get to my feet.”

“..though afterwards, he’s right back to glaring at Olivia.”

“It looks like he’s trying to pressure her with a staring contest of some sort.”

I “Uh... Don’t worry about it, alright?”

“My attempt at de-escalating the situation is met with Olivia’s frustrated expression, which gradually gives way to one of defeat.

O “...Sorry, Inco...”

“She wheels her chair around, beginning to distance herself from Ben and I.”

“And before long, she’s left the court entirely..”

“Damien catches up to her, and I can see him talking a mile a minute at her.”

“Liz gives me a worried look before she too takes off after Damien and Olivia.”

“Ben gives me one last encouraging nod before taking off himself.”

“And now I’m left mostly alone on the tarmac.”

“Guess I should get home as well.”

“...”

>>Converges into chapter 3

-End Chapter-

_____

Chapter 3
Aug 25
Inco takes the local metro to school, admiring the work he's going to submit to the art contest on his phone. He meets the G-Man. He inquires into Inco's school life. In art class (inco's homeroom), the opening of the voting period for the art contest is announced. Inco tries asking Olivia about it, but she evades answering. The two work on an assignment together.

Inco isn't done by the time lunch rolls around, so he has to try working on it more then. Liz says she would help to tutor Inco but she's already busy helping Damien, who is currently acting foolish. Olivia chimes in and explains the issue to Inco in a relatively passive aggressive way. Liz and Damien voice their surprise at Olivia engaging, and their conversation together carries over to their History class.

Inco notices several students passing around a note and playing a game in which each student doodles some detail on a canvas. He awaits his turn, but he gets passed over as well as olivia, who is seated in front of him. the students get caught, and the teacher throws the note in the trash. olivia notices, and tries to start a version of the game herself. the note gets passed around and then gets back to inco completely blank aside from olivia's initial draft.
Inco is conflicted if he should join in given she's not 'in' with the in crowd he thinks he's in in addition to being caught.
Inco can either pass up on the note or add something and play along.
Passing the option up has inco keep the note until after class, after which he gives it back to olivia and warns her she could get in trouble and he saved her (lol)
playing along with the game, inco adds to the doodle and passes it ahead of him. he notices olivia perk up in excitement, before passing out the note again. the note goes back and forth until the end of the period, and after the bell rings Olivia finally turns around to see who was playing with her, excited until she sees it's him, and then leaving for her next period without another word. (+1 inco)

After school as Inco walks out of the school he comes across G-Man and Scaler finishing a tour of the school. The two exchange goodbyes as they happen upon Inco. Scaler introduces the G-Man to Inco as someone who’ll be around the school observing the going-ons of the students. G-Man shakes hands with Inco, and the two talk as they walk to Inco’s metro station home.

Chapter 3

“Friday the twenty-fifth.”

“Quite the eventful week I’ve had so far.”

“I’ve yet to receive any real school work, it feels more like a week of acquainting myself with everything.”

“Thinking back to my old school, I guess it did line up with how the first week usually went.”

“Then again, new school and everything.”[ad]

“As I stroll down to my pick-up station I find myself reflecting more on my own going-ons instead of going over any blog updates.”

“I mean, last I checked there weren’t any.”

“...”

“Yeah, no, nothing really interesting going on still with any of the people I’m following.”

“...”

“It’s kinda depressing in a weird way. I spent so much time online, always looking for whatever big was happening.”

“Always felt like there was something new every day.”

“Maybe it was the rose tinting of my old shades.”

“Hmm, I think I left a lil early.”

“A quick check of the time and yep, I’ve got a good twenty minutes or so to kill.”

“Before I swipe over to my phone's browser, I take a moment to admire the background.”

“It was the best shot I had in my portfolio, from a lone hiking trail I’d found ages ago back home.”

“...my old home…”

“The shot was still really good, good enough to use for my submission in the art contest.”

"As a matter of fact, I've still got the thumb drive dangling from my keys."

"A little trophy, if you would…"

??? "That's the logo for St. Hammond High, isn't it?"

"I turn to the mystery voice."

I "Uh… yeah?"

"There's a seriously ominous vibe surrounding the [insert physical characteristics here when we get them] scaled businessman before me.mia

I "How do you know where I go to school?"

??? "I believe my… niece goes to that school."

"I inch away slightly."

"His 'niece'? Sounds like a flimsy excuse to me."

??? "Oh, you needn't worry. I just want to ask you about your time at St. Hammond's."

I "What?"

??? "Your school. I'm asking if you're enjoying your time there so far."

"Raptor Jesus, what the hell is happening?"

??? "Hmm, sabretooth got your tongue, I guess."

??? "Shame, though I hope we'll have more opportunities to chat. Seems our schedules happen to align."

“With that, the stranger turns to the arriving train.”

“I try to think of something to say, but absolutely nothing comes to mind.”

"He knows about my school? Does that mean he works there?"

“Something about this guy gives me the creeps. Hopefully he doesn’t start following me.”

[fade to black]

"I try to do my best to avoid that suited psycho on the train."

"Although I can catch a glimpse of him as we disembark, I quickly lose him in the throng of bodies on the platform."

"What a creep…"

"I hope I don't see him at school."

[open on hallway]

“Shuffling in through the crowd of students, I don’t have to look at my directory to recall what class I have first.”

“It’s off to the locker rooms with me.”

“I can only imagine what Gym will be like today…”

#fade to gym

Coach “[b][i] ALRIGHT YOU MAGGOTS! [/i][/b]”

Coach “[b][i] SOUND OFF LIKE YOU GOT A PAIR![/i][/b]”

“Yep. Same as usual.”

Damien “Hey, Inco, we should like, hang out after school. I was thinking-”

Coach “[b][i] DAMIEN! QUIT LOLLYGAGGING AROUND AND GET BACK TO LIFTING OR I WILL PERSONALLY SHOW YOU HOW HEAVY THOSE WEIGHTS ARE![/i][/b]”

#Damien reacts accordingly

Coach [b][i]”WHY CAN’T YOU LOT BE MORE LIKE THAT FANTASTIC FILLY MIA OVER THERE!”[/b][/i]

#Show Mia Flexing?

“I respect Damien’s attempts to chat, at least.”

“Heck, he even manages to talk to Mia sometimes.”

“I don’t think Mia actually listens, but that never stopped him.”

#fade to black

“Coated in sweat and practically unable to move, I have to limp to my next class.”

#slowly fade to art class

#start some upbeat music or some shit idk

“Hopefully I won’t have to stand today.”

“I take my seat next to a certain green gator, again as usual.”

“Man, it feels like I’ve already gotten used to this routine. I hope I don’t sink into a rut so soon.”

“Class still hasn’t started yet.”

“My eyes wander over to Olivia. Looks like she’s doodling again in her notebook.”

“Makes sense, since it’s still homeroom.”

“Now that I think about it, she’s almost always doodling. She only ever stops to take notes in Mr. Iadakan’s classes.”

“How can she expect to do well in any other class?”

“I consider asking her why she doesn’t take things more seriously, but I decide against it.”

“The last thing I want is for her to be mad at me again…”

“...”

#obnoxious siren sound effect

“[i][b]WREEEEEEE~![/b][/i]”

#reverby comical tone over the PA section like spongebob

??? “[i]Good morning, St. Hammond! Today is Friday, August twenty-fifth, 201M2022 B.C.[/i]”

??? “[i]The herbivore lunch menu for today is Tofu Patty on Wheat Roll served with mixed vegetables and fruit.[/i]”

??? “[i]The carnivore and omnivore lunch menu for today is Pulled Goat on Sourdough served with mixed vegetables and fruit.[/i]”

??? “[i]Today’s volleyball practice session has been rescheduled to 4:00 PM. Team members, please plan your schedules accordingly.[/i]”

“As expected, nothing important.”

“Unsurprisingly, not a single person in the room is paying much attention to the droning words.”

“The intercom continues to rattle off mundane announcements for another minute or so, risking putting even the most extra-curricular student to sleep.”

??? “[i]In other news, all submissions for the St. Hammond Fall Art Contest have been cataloged, and the student body may now begin the voting process.[/i]”

#noticeable mood shift, music change?

“Oh, right! I almost forgot about the art contest.”

“Suddenly, a slight breeze brushes against my left cheek.”

“I glance towards Olivia, whose head shot up at the mention of

the art contest.”

“I would have guessed she was excited, but…”

#Olivia looks concerned

“Maybe she didn’t submit in time?”

??? “ [i]That ends today’s announcements, as well as Homeroom. Please have a fantastic rest of your day, St. Hammond![/i]

“[i][b]WREEE~Kck![/b][/i]”

“It takes about a second or so for everyone to return to their usual idle musings after the PA announcement.”

“There’s a certain something brewing in my gut at the notion that my entry into the art contest could wind up being the winner.”

“Though maybe I’m thinking too optimistically about it.”

“Olivia, meanwhile, remains on edge.”

“She shoots me a quick glance before shifting her attention completely away from me, and on to her notebook, which she’s kept open this whole time.”

“Despite my desire to not intrude into her private matters, my curiosity gets the better of me as I take a closer look at what she’s drawn.”

“The biggest of the doodles looks like some kind of drawing of herself in a kaiju form rampaging through some hastily drawn buildings.”

“Next to that drawing is what I can only describe as a very rough caricature of Mr. Solly.”

“Of course, he’s drawn in the most unflattering way possible, leaving no room for doubt just what Olivia’s image of our PE teacher is.”

“There are other doodles all over the page.”

“Most are incomprehensible from my angle, though I do catch what almost looks like some kind of rat wielding a giant sword and wearing a cape.”

I “So… what are you drawing there?”

O “Mind your own business, Inco.”[ae]

I “Just making an observation is all.”

I “Really like your doodles.”

“Olivia lets out a long sigh and leans back on her wheelchair a bit.”

O “Just be honest and say they suck already.”

O “No one likes being lied to.”

I “But… I do like them.”

“All I’m given is an exaggerated rolling of her ivory eyes.”

“I lean in to whisper to Olivia, minding Mr. Idakan’s gaze.”

I “You… okay?”

O “...”

O “...Yeah…”

O “...Just didn’t sleep well…”

“Now that I really think about it, getting in and out of bed must be an absolute show all its own.”[af]

I “I’m sorry to hear that, Olivia.”

O “...”

O “...Don’t worry about it, Inco…”

“Olivia still isn’t quite meeting my eyes as she says those words.”

“What’s more, she starts to fiddle with her pencil in a very skittish manner.”

“I spot a single bead of sweat slowly trailing down from the side of her forehead.”

O “Hey Inco, ever wonder why announcements have to be so boring?” [ag]

“Olivia’s question suddenly catches me off-guard.”

I “What do you mean?”

“The ring of the bell signals the change of period, for all the good that is since Olivia and I don’t even touch our bags.”

“The rest of the class slowly shuffles out the room, and with five minutes to waste I turn fully to Olivia to continue our talk.”

O “I mean exactly what I said.”

O “There has to be some way to make the morning announcements

actually entertaining to both hear AND watch.”

O “As they are, they are just SO dull and boring.”

“Can’t argue with Olivia on that thought.”

I “Yeah, I guess that’s a good point.”

I “Still, how would you make something like the morning announcements entertaining?”

“Olivia looks at her doodles on her notebook and hums.”

O “Well…”

O “Maybe if there were some cool visuals to go with them?”

I “Pardon?”

O “Yeah, like, imagine if Mr. Iadakan had drawn out the announcements on the board.”

“I try to picture it in my head.”

“I think the main thing from the announcements was that the voting part of the contest was now open.”

“Nothing really comes to mind for it, sadly.”

I “I don’t see it, Olivia.”

“She snorts.”

O “Maybe if you had some imagination to begin with.”

“That cut deeper than I thought it would.”

I “I can be imaginative.”

O “Suuure you can.”

“Olivia takes the moment to flip her notebook to a fresh page, ready for whatever Mr. Iadakan would teach us today.”

O “I wish all my classes were like this one, honestly.”

“Don’t even need to imagine why.”

“Mr. Iadakan is so animated with his lessons.”

“Even when it’s just some historical lessons, he’s constantly strutting around the room as he goes over things that happened in the past.”

“The class starts to fill in again, and Olivia turns her attention to Mr. Iadakan as he strolls to the front of the room.”

“As soon the bell rings, Mr. Iadakan is furiously writing something on the board.”

Iad “Alright my lovely students, I’ve got something special in mind for you all.”

“In a matter of seconds Mr. Iadakan had managed to go through an entire box of markers, drawing out what looked to be a rainbow ball on the board.”

Iad “Today and over the weekend you’ll be creating your own color wheels.”

Iad “They’ll be a useful tool for those of you who feel unimaginative when it comes to coloring.”

“I can feel my ears burn at that.”

“Along with a certain someone’s smug grin.”

Iad “No need to worry about supplies, I’ve brought enough for you all to bring home and keep.”

Iad “Inco, would you kindly assist me with handing these out?”

“The pale teacher places a heavy looking case of colored pencil packs on my desk.”

“Before I can say anything, Mr. Iadakan continues talking about the purpose for the assignment.”

“I get up from my seat and carefully open the huge box, looking at the neatly packed boxes of art tools to hand out.”

“I look at all of my classmates, tallying up the number of packs I need to hand out.”

O “What’s taking so long?”

“Olivia looks impatient, her fingers tapping on the art stock sheet Iadakan had already passed out.”

“I shrug, foregoing the count and just grabbing up an armful of the pencil boxes.”

“The trip around the room is slow going as I’m being mindful of people’s backpacks on the floor.”

“Thankfully I’d gotten more than enough to hand out, depositing the extra packs back into the box.”

“Now all that’s left is to actually get started.”

“Except I have this huge box taking up most of my desk space.”

I “Uh, Mr. Iadakan, what do I do with this?”

“I motion at the giant box for effect.”

Iad “Oh, well, if you’d be so kind as to put it away with the rest of the art supplies.”

“He in turn motions to the innocuous door in the back of the room.”

“I nod and heft the box up.”

“UUuugh! This thing weighs a ton!”

“I feel my shoulders creak as I awkwardly carry the box.”

“At the door, I brace the box against the frame and my torso, and use a hand and foot to open the door just enough for me and the box to get it.”

“The room is painted pitch-black, and there’s no light switch in sight.”

“There’s a long empty sink inside the room, perfect spot for me to set the box down.”

“As I exit the room and regain my sight, I look at the well-made model on the board.”

Iad “Inco, what are you doing?”

I “Er, the assignment, sir?”

“He chuckles.”

I “What?”

Iad “You haven’t finished your task yet, though.”

“What?”

“The pale pterosaur’s foot taps on a stack of very similar cases next to his desk.”

“Oh.”

“Darn it.”

“I sigh and move to continue my given task.”

“...”

“Thirty minutes and a very sore set of arms and legs, I finish moving all the art supplies into the dark supply closet.”

“Job complete, I close the door and see that I only have fifteen minutes left.”

Iad “Thank you, Mr. Nito. I’d have taken all day to do that.”

Iad “And don’t worry about finishing this today.”

“I nearly jump out of my skin.”

“When did he get behind me?”

Iad “Is something wrong?”

I “No sir.”

“I quickly return to my seat, taking the last fifteen minutes before the bell to draw the perfect circle to start my assignment.”

“Why are circles always so tough?! All the cartoons made it look so easy…”

#fade to black

“Too soon I hear that familiar screaming of the bell.”

“I look down at my [i]almost[/i] finished assignment.”

“A wreath of burning shame sits around my neck.”

“I get Mr. Iadakan said I didn’t have to finish it all now, but still… Maybe I’ll finish it up at lunch.”

#fade in to cafeteria. Liz and Damien are “sitting”/on the left facing right, and inco is opposite

Liz “...then you put that in parentheses and divide it by [i] that[/i]...”

Damien “Divide it by [i]this[/i]?”

#show liz angry. Maybe shake? If shaking, keep until emote change

Liz “DamienIsweartoRJ-”

“Damien just chuckles like a goofball.”

“Normally I wouldn’t mind listening to the two of them go back and forth, but right now it’s just a distraction.”

#show liz neutral

Liz “No… Damien… It’s…”

“Poor Liz, she’s at the end of her rope. The strain in her voice sounds like enough to make her vocal cords snap.”

“As Liz tries her best not to scream in utter frustration while begging whatever deity is out there to save her from this abominable fate, I continue to make progress on my art assignment.”

“Or at least attempt to, anyways.”

I “Hey uh, Liz.”

#maybe have liz’s head go up and disappear only to come down flipped to face inco on the other side? Or otherwise possibly humorously have her face inco
#maybe have her head shake a little to show she’s still mad

Liz “Yes, [i]Inco[/i]?”

“She’s on the verge of breaking, it was a mistake to ask.”

“I can only pray she lets me leave with my life.”

I “I was wondering about this homework… uh, how do you get a tertiary color?”

I “Didn’t know if that’s something… you’d know…”

“(gulp)”

Liz “Inco I’d love to help, I really would, but I’ve got to finish tutoring Damien he-”

Damien “Oh I get it!”

D “I divide by [i]THIS[/i] one, right?”

#if we had liz’s head [i]shoop[/i] up and over to face inco, have her do it again to face damien but even quicker this time to express her intense displeasure with him

Liz “N o, D a m i e n.”

Liz “L e t m e s h o w y o u a g a i n.”[ah]
#print text slowly, shaking

O “Inco, you utter dumbass.”

#fade Olivia RIGHT next to inco, facing the same direction
#maybe “pop” inco up a bit and flip him around to express his shock

I “AH!”

“How did she sneak up behind me??”

O “You mix a primary and a secondary color, and it gives you a tertiary. That was one of the first things Iadakan said today.”

O “Have you been paying attention at all in class?”

I “Y-yes.”

“She rolls her eyes, unimpressed.”

“Wheeling closer to the table, Olivia leans forward to peer at my paper.”

“She grins maliciously.”

O “O-ho-ho, man you’re [i]screwed[/i]!”

I “Iadakan said I didn’t have to finish it all today, yknow.”[ai]

O “Yeah but do you really want to make him wait? He’s gonna think you’re a dumbass.”

O “I already completed my paper before we even left the class.”

“The smugness drips from her words like perspiration off a window, and it makes me want to tip her chair over.”[aj]

I “Well, since you’re here…”

#show Olivia surprised? Followed by whatever we have for a grumpy/”ughh” face

O “Do I have to?”

I “Pretty please with sprinkles on top?”

“I flash her my best baby doe eyes.”[ak]

O “...”

O
“Fiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiine.”
#drag out the “i”s

“Olivia snatches the paper from my hands and slams it down on the table.”

“With a low grumble and some barely audible mumbles, Olivia gets to working on fixing my assignment, her hands flying from side to side faster than I had ever seen before.”[al]

“Within a matter of minutes, she slams down her pencil and shoves the paper into my chest, her face a mixture of pride and annoyance.”

O “There.”

“I look at the paper in my hands and find myself astonished that it’s not only completed, but even corrected, albeit with a healthy dose of markings calling me all kinds of unflattering names for missing some of the basics.”

“I look back to Olivia, who still bears a scowl on her face.”

O “Well?”

I “I mean, it’s finished.”

O “Have you read the notes?”

O “You’re not going to stop being such a dumbass if you don’t read the notes.”

I “I mean… did you have to make them so… blunt?”

“Oliva’s scowl deepens as she crosses her arms.”[am]

O “Bluntness seems to be the only way to get to you.”

“As I open my mouth to make a totally witty and snide come-back, my focus shifts to the other two dinosaurs sitting at the table.”

“Liz and Damien seem to have stopped arguing, and are now more engaged with Olivia and I.”

“Olivia waits impatiently for my words, but they never come. She turns to see what I’m looking at.”

O “What the hell are you two looking at?”

Liz “Oh! N-nothing, Olivia. Just uh-”

Dam[an] “We’re surprised you’re being so helpful!”

“Air almost immediately – and painfully – escapes Damien's mouth as Liz elbows the crap out of his ribs.”
#maybe shift Liz towards damien with a bit of sprite overlap to signify the hit. Don’;t think there’s a close enough looking emote for damien to be reacting to getting hit, though

[ao]
#olivia surprised
O “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Liz “What Damien is [i] trying [/i] to say is, well, you’ve been really reserved for the longest time.”

Liz “Just surprised to see you… in better spirits, is all.”

#olivia unimpressed/neutral

O “You’re making it weird.”
[ap]

O “Don’t make it weird.”

“I look down at the paper in my hands, and gloss over all the swear-laden notes.”

“The din of the trio of arguing dinosaurs fades out as I read.”

“I can’t help but laugh at some of the insults.”

“Soon enough, the bell cuts through the conversation.”

“Olivia good naturedly rolls off[aq] in a huff, and Liz practically drags Damien away from the table.”

“I fold the papers and slip them in my pocket as I clean my area and power walk to catch up with Olivia.”

#Hallway

I “So… History…”

“Olivia grunts bluntly as her arms push the wheels on her chair.”

I “Say, wouldn’t it be easier if I pushed you there?”

“There’s a feral growl from her, making my teeth click shut.”

I “I mean, I noticed that you tend to sleep in hist-”

O “No.”

“No?”

I “But like, it’d help you out, so you aren’t so tired-”

"Olivia stops dead in her tracks. Somehow, I manage not to run right into her."

"I think her tail gave me some advance warning."[ar]

O “I don’t need anyone to push me.”

"Olivia looks straight ahead as she talks, her voice quiet."

O “I can do this just fine, Inco.”
[as]

“I look ahead of us, where the stairs are at, since History is on the second floor.”

“Olivia's already stopped short and is mid-turn when I look back."

“I’d never realized that there was an elevator here. It’s tucked away between the lockers, no surprise I’d never actually seen it.”

“The door opens and it’s absolutely cramped, barely fitting Olivia and her chair.”

“I watch the doors close, Olivia’s backside disappearing.”

“I consider running up the stairs, to meet her at the elevator.”

“But then again, we’re going to the same place anyway.”

“I’ll just meet her at Mr. Triggum’s class.”

“...”

O [i]“Well?”[/i]

“Oh, oh damn it.”

“Way to be a dick, Inco.”[at]

#fade to history

“I blink my eyes awake for the fourth time in ten minutes.”

“Lunch sits heavily in my stomach, and I regret eating as much as I did.”

“Involuntarily I yawn, trying to play it off as something else so as to not piss off the teacher.”

“...”

“Jolting awake for the second time since class started, I make a promise to future-me to never fill my plate up as much again.” [au]

“Blinking sleepiness from my eyes and trying to pay attention to the lecture as best I can, I notice movement in the corner of my view.”

“... Did he just pass something?”

“I sit and watch as, yes, one student after another writes something down. They then pass whatever it is on to the next person.”

“Maybe someone set up a raffle after school?”

“No, they’re writing for too long.”

“One student passes it to another student.”

“That student passes it on further, the chain adding new links.”

“I stir with anticipation in my seat.”

“Yes, it’s a piece of paper; some kind of drawing challenge.”

“When it gets to me, maybe I can put something funny down.”

“Oh yeah, it’ll be so funny [i]everyone[/i] will laugh and want to get to know me.”

“‘[i]Oh yeah you’re the guy who put that thing down in class, that was pretty clever.[/i]’”

“Perfect conversation material, I can already see it.”

“Four more students. Three more students. Penultimate. It’s right next to me.”

“My hand twitches as I wait for the appropriate time to reach out and take it…”

T “Hey, cut that shit out!”

"Mr. Triggums finally notices the paper being passed around.”

“He lunges at the table and wrenches it away from the unlucky student."

“I almost physically deflate in my chair.”

“That’s cool, I guess… I’m sure there will be other times.”

T "y'all know there's only one thing you're allowed to pass around in my class!"

"The teacher crumples the paper up and scores a two pointer into the trash can before returning to his lecture."

T "Nerve of these kids, I swear…"

"The red-clawed criminal next to me rolls his eyes dramatically."

"Grinning, they waggle their eyebrows at me while holding one nostril closed and snorting."

"What, is this some kind of dinosaur thing?"

"Maybe I should do it too…"

"..."

"Okay, given the looks I just got, it must be a dino thing."

"I try to divert my embarrassment by glancing the other way, to Olivia."

“That display caught Olivia’s attention.”

“What was formerly a bored gator has now perked up.”[av]

“I can almost see the devious smile from the opposite side of her head.”

“Olivia tears off a piece of paper from her note book and scribbles something down on it.”

“She folds the paper over and slides it over to the next student.”

“Who… slides it to the next without so much as a glance.”

“My heart sinks into my stomach inch by inch as each of my classmates quickly passes the folded sheet to the next person.”

“I follow the note along its journey, continuously passed around the classroom unopened.”[aw]

“This time, the student next to me is polite enough to drop it unceremoniously on my portion of the desk.”

“I carefully unfold the paper, hiding it behind my history textbook so Mr. Triggums doesn’t take it again.”

“The sheet of paper is mostly white, save for a doodle of a rat riding atop of…er… inside of a head.”

“She even initialed the sketch with an ‘O.H.’”

“I hear a violent sniff[ax], and quickly hide the doodle sheet under my textbook as the triceratops teacher stalks by my desk.”

T “Now y'all better stop lollygagging in my class.”

“He’s overcome with another powerful sniffle, his palm sliding over his snout to try and hide it.”

T “Never know when these his-tor-ic-al facts may help you out.”

T “Like ‘membering it’s Andrew Jacksaur[ay] on the twenty dollar bill.”

“He continues moving down the row of desks finally, giving me the chance to pull the sheet back out.”

“I’m now left with a conundrum.”

“I never got to doodle on the previous piece.”

“Snatched away right before my big chance.”

“The temptation to flex my art skills is right before me.”

"I can feel the rest of the class casting devious stares in my direction."

"Seems the whole class wants to find out if I'll contribute to Olivia's little game."

"The same game that everyone passed on…"

"But, no one else is gonna see it, right? It's just Olivia I'm passing to."[az]

"And with Mr. Triggums’ walking around the room like this I’d definitely get caught.”

"We’d be the ones to get singled out, since we’re the only ones who’d have drawn on this one.”

“There might be a reason {i}why{/i} no one contributed when Olivia got involved…"

>>Just sketch it quickly
>>I don’t wanna get us both in trouble

>>Just sketch it quickly

"Look, no one's gonna see what I sketch, right?"[ba]

"So why not just do it?"

"As I start putting pencil to paper, I can see the student on my right scoff slightly."

"Yeah, yeah, laugh while you've got the chance, buddy."

"Olivia's left plenty of the canvas free for people to add onto."

"I feel a need to use all of it.”

“Maybe she won't notice that it was just me who played along…"

"My skills are definitely lacking compared to hers, but I've at least learned some things from Iadakan's class."

"Yeah… Yeah, that looks like a person…"

"...Or a scarecrow."

"Wait, fuck, that hand has six fingers."

"And oh god, are those supposed to be {i}feet{/i}?"

"Damnit, Inco, get your head in the game!"

"A loud {i}snirkh{/i} from behind me freezes my hand mid-erase."

"I totally forgot about Triggums making his rounds."

"Hurriedly, I fold up the paper in fourths and pass it over to Olivia."

"At least, that's what I intended."

"My hastily-flung note pings off the side of her snout and flutters down into her lap."

"I get a half-second glare of immense fury from her before Triggums steps between us."

T "..."

"Pleasepleaseplease don't notice the note…"

[Maybe the school bell rings here?]

T "Alright y'all, time to wrap up."

"I heave a sigh of relief as the rest of the class starts throwing books into backpacks."

T "For tomorrow, I want everyone to- HEY SIT YOUR ASSES BACK DOWN! THAT BELL DOESN'T DISMISS YOU!"[bb]

"Triggums' attempts to reclaim order are little more than screams into the void as we all pour out of the class."

"Barely got away with that one."

"Maybe doodling wasn't such a good-"

O "Hey."

"Olivia's chair bangs off the lockers harshly right in front of me, blocking my path."

O "Was this you?"

"She holds up the note."

"Raptor Jesus save me, it looks worse than I thought."

I "Y-yeah, that was me."

"Olivia gives me a cool glare."

O "..."

O "What {i}is{/i} it?"

I "Well…"

"I make an exaggerated squint at my abomination."

I "I think this was supposed to be a body…"

O "Wait, that's a body?"

O "I thought it was a dolphin."

I "Okay, how the hell did you think this was-"

"I catch on to Olivia's smile."

"Oh, I see how it is…"

I "Look, if you can't appreciate my artistic genius, I'll just take it off your hands."

"Olivia snatches it away at the last second."

O "I dunno… I think I'll keep it."

O "It'll make a good cage liner."

"Spinning herself around quick enough to slap my shins with her tail, Olivia takes off to her next class."

“...”

>>Convergence point

>>I don’t wanna get us both in trouble

“I carefully fold up the sketch paper and conceal it between my sleeve and wrist.”

“The gazes I felt on my back shift away, and I can finally relax.”

“After class I’ll give this back to Olivia.”

“That way I won’t have to worry about the teacher scolding both of us.”[bc]

“The rest of class I focused entirely on Mr. Triggum’s snort filled lecture.”[bd]

“...”

[Maybe the school bell rings here?]

T "Alright y'all, time to wrap up."

"I heave a sigh of relief as the rest of the class starts throwing books into backpacks."

T "For tomorrow, I want everyone to- HEY SIT YOUR ASSES BACK DOWN! THAT BELL DOESN'T DISMISS YOU!"

"Triggums' attempts to reclaim order are little more than screams into the void as we all pour out of the class."

“I follow the rest of the class out, power walking to try and catch up with a certain wheelchair bound girl.”

I “Hey.”

“Olivia’s glare makes me stop a little further away than I would’ve liked.”

I “I uh… I think this is yours.”

“I hold out the folded sheet, a look of surprise crossing her face.”

“She actually turns to me and takes the paper from me, unfolding with care.”

“And then frowns.”

I “I figured I’d hold onto it, so the teacher wouldn’t throw it away.”

I “I uh, really liked the doodle.”

“Wordlessly Olivia turns and continues on her way.”[be][bf]

“Bit rude if you ask me, but she’s probably just worried about getting to class on time.”

“...”

>>Convergence point

>>Convergence point

#Fade out and fade in on school exterior
[School bell rings perhaps?]

“The last bell goes off, and everyone packs their bags.”

“I too pack my belongings almost in auto-pilot, not really giving much thought to my actions until I’m well out of my last class and on my way out of the school.”

“Weird how despite it only being a few days at most since I started school I already feel comfortable enough to do things automatically.”

“It’s a sign of familiarity, and that’s a good thing, especially considering how recent my move was.”

“I step out of the school and start to head down my usual home route.”

“But as I do, I spot two dinos standing by the frontmost part of the school.”

“One of the dinos is Ms. Scaler, another cup of what I can only guess is coffee in her hand.”

“The other is a dino I had only recently met earlier today on the way to school.”

“I never did catch his name…”

“I decide to err on the side of caution and try to give the two a wide enough berth, so as to not get in the way of whatever business they were getting to.”

Scal “—And that concludes the main school tour. Do you have any questions?”

??? “No, I believe I have seen quite enough to make an informed decision, Ms. Scaler. We'll be in touch regarding the continuing inspection very soon.”

“Ms. Scaler flinches.”

Scal “I look forward to hearing what your employers have to say based on today’s tour.”

[bg][bh]
??? “Oh, I think they’ll be delighted to hear what I have to report.”

Scal “O-oh, Wonderful. That is simply wonderful! [bi][bj]

“Ms. Scaler gives her guest a wide, albeit slightly forced, grin as she extends her arm and opens her hand for a handshake.”

“The unknown dino moves in to shake Scaler’s hand, but as he does, he glances to his surroundings once again, his eyes eventually settling right on me.”

??? “Well, how interesting.”

??? “We meet again.”

“Scaler turns her attention to me.”

Scal “Oh, Mr. Niitoo, wasn’t expecting to run into you.”

“That’s… still not my last name, Ms. Scaler.”

“The principal turns to face her guest with a wide beam on her lips”

"Principal Scaler hooks an arm around my shoulders as I attempt to scoot past the two of them."

"I can feel her claws sink into the fabric of my jacket as she drags me back like a fish on a line."

"In a second I'm thrust in front of the mysterious stranger."

Scal “Mr. Niitoo, this here is Mr. Farris.”

Scal “Mr. Farris here is a member of the school board. He’s taken an interest in our wonderful campus and its faculty and students and thus will be… how did you put it again, Mr. Farris?”

Fa “‘A particularly close eye on the goings-on in and around St. Hammond High’ Ms.Scaler.”

Scal “Exactly.”

Scal “So I hope you and the rest of our students put on your best behaviors and bring out that true St. Hammond spirit out for all to see and marvel at.”

Fa “Oh, I don’t think that’s going to be an issue. I am liking the atmosphere this school has going on right now.”

Scal “That may be the case, but that doesn’t mean the students and faculty can’t do better!”

“I mean… that’s true. But man, way to put the pressure on us Ms. Scaler…”

"I guess that's why she's using me as a human shield right now."

"Although I'm not sure if I'm supposed to protect her, or if I'm about to be offered up as a sacrifice…"

Fa “Well, it has been a lovely time seeing the school in person, and the tour was an absolute treat, but I’m afraid that I’m sadly running out of time for the day.”

Fa “I must return to the district office to present my report on St. Hammond, as well as receive the rest of the paperwork that I’ll be required to fill out for the rest of the year.”

Scal “Oh, I’m sorry for keeping you up then, Mr. Farris.”

"Jeez, she leapt onto that like a lifeboat."

"Guess this Mr. Farris guy is making her more up-tight than usual…"

Fa “Don’t worry too much about it, Ms. Scaler. All part of the job.”

Scal “Well, in that case, I’ll go ahead and leave you then. Mr. Niitoo, you have a good day as well. See you tomorrow bright and early!”

“Scaler doesn’t even wait for me to raise my hand to shake hers, instead opting to reach out and grab mine of her own initiative."

#bone crunching sounds

"OwRaptorJesusFUCK!"

"Fucking dino strength, I swear to…"

"In her haste to leave, Scaler pays little attention to the damage she just inflicted, instead, taking a sip from her mug and walking back into the school as fast as her heels allow."

"That leaves me in front of the school with Mr. Farris.”

“I turn to look at Mr. Farris and give him a weak smile and nod.”

"Hopefully this guy won't try to turn my bones into powder."

"Seriously, just how spooked was Scaler?"[bk]

I “Well, it’s been nice finally getting to meet you Mr. Farris, but I must be getting home if I’m to finish up my homework and get some rest.”

Fa “Pleasure finally making your acquaintance. Apologies for not doing so earlier today.”

“Mr. Farris extends a hand towards me in a show of manners.”

“Before I can stop myself, I reach out and shake his hand.”

"Damn my stupid friendly desposition…"

"Mercifully, his grip is relaxed."

I “It’s okay, Mr. Farris. Meeting on the Metro doesn’t exactly allow for proper introductions, even in the best of conditions.”

Fa “Which, if my watch is correct, will be leaving shortly. I must be on my way, same as you I am sure.”

“I gaze down at my own watch and can feel the alarms go off in the back of my mind.”

I “OH cra-I mean, yeah, I have to get going!”

Fa “Well, I must also be taking the same train to get to the district office, so why don’t we resume our introductions on the way there?”

“I’m not exactly that comfortable with the idea of swapping information with someone I had just met, but slightly off-putting first impressions this morning aside, he didn’t seem to be that bad a guy.”

“Not like he’s going to turn out to be some kind of serial killer or something, especially if he works for the school district. They don’t just hire any psycho off the street to work for them.”

I “Okay, I don’t see why not.”

“With a nod and a readjustment of my backpack, Mr. Farris and I

set off towards the train station, all the while the two of us talk more about St. Hammond, a bit more about her niece, and Volcaldera Bluffs in general."

"I mean, there's worse company to go home with, and it at least means I won't be alone for a bit…"

"Yeah… that works for me…"[bl]

--End Chapter--

_____

Chapter 4
Sep 1
During art class, Inco and Olivia are mid-conversation when a few classmates ask Inco about his work. Inco is surprised people like his work, and Olivia shares his excitement. Inco finds her reaction peculiar. At lunch, Ben stops by to check on Inco, and Olivia immediately retreats back into her own shell. On the way to history, they encounter Mia, who is currently giving false compliments to Olivia's work to other students. the other students feebly protest, citing Olivia's wheelchair. Inco can either speak up or let Olivia handle the situation.
Being a white knight simp, he does a poor job and causes Mia to direct her anger to inco, and struts out after getting her say. Letting Olivia handle the situation has Inco observe Mia trying to bait olivia into a heated response, which she's able to avoid. (+1 Olivia)
At the end of the day, the main four discuss what happened earlier, Olivia gets her 'hotwheels' nickname from Damien (it's one of the insults hurled at olivia before). Olivia and Inco walk together to the metro station, Inco calls her 'hotwheels' before jumping on the metro home, much to Olivia's anger.

Chapter 4
"It's officially September today."

"And things are starting to feel natural in school now."

"For one thing, the weird crowding thing that had been happening every morning has started to die down."[bm]

“Less and less of St. Hammond’s students were asking to talk or hang out with me.”

“They didn’t right out stop trying to get pictures or sharing their social media accounts, but they had certainly stopped swarming me everywhere I went.”

“Guess by this point, they’ve gotten their fill of me…”

“While I’m mostly happy that I can now walk down the school halls without getting swarmed by a bunch of multi-colored saurians, a part of me felt a bit sad that I no longer was the center of attention.”

“Well, at least compared to my old school, I’ve actually made some good friends.”

“Though I do wonder, could they be considered good friends at this point?”

“I mean, I got along with them good for the most part, and we were really friendly during the times we interacted, but was that enough?”

“I had yet to actually hang out with them outside of school.”

“Good friends did that sort of thing, right?”

“...”

“Well, it’s still early in the school year.”

“Can’t expect them to fully open themselves up to someone they had just met months ago.”

“And not like I’m also rushing either.”

“Not like I even know what dinos like to do on their time off, though I’m sure it can’t be that much different from what us sapiens do.”[bn]

“...”

“Now, now Inco, can’t be thinking like that now.”

“What would your buds online say if they realized you had such thoughts?”

“They’d probably call me a bigot or something along those lines.” [bo][bp]

“I really need to do more research into things that both humans and dinos can do together.”

“They can’t be THAT different.”

“Sure, dinos are stronger and faster in some cases, and a few have higher protein requirements than your average sapien.”

“Then again, there were the more primal sapiens that just so happen to have bulkier builds.”

“Now that I think about it, Coach Solly kinda fits that description, though he’s unlike any other sapien I have ever seen.”

“Could he maybe be some kind of sasquatch or sasquatch-adjacent sapien?”

“...”

“Why am I even pondering[bq] all this right now?”

??? “Hey, you’re that Inco kid that transferred not that long ago,right?”

??? “Love what you’re doing out there.

??? “Can I get a picture with you!?”

“Oh yeah, got derailed thinking about how I don’t seem to be that popular anymore.”

"Guess I'm not entirely a loser yet…"

#in small font
"If my old school is anything to go by, it'll take at least until October for that to settle in."[br]

“Oh well, I think I have the time for this pic before I’m late for Idakan’s class.”

#Some kind of transition to the classroom

“Whew!”

“Made it just in time.”

“I take my seat right next to Olivia and let myself relax just for a second.”

“Olivia is, as usual, doodling away on her notebook.”

“I take a quick peek at her new doodle, curious to see who she’s trying to turn into a caricature today.”

“Much to my surprise, it’s none other than Mia.”

“Olivia decided to draw her as what I can only describe in the most flattering of ways as a druggie harlot.”

“Her clothes are even more ripped than her usual attire, her jacket is filled with all kinds of unflattering patches, and her

hair is styled into a gaudy mohawk that only detracts slightly from her face full of piercings and rings.”[bs]

“In fact, she has a couple of rings piercing her eyelids to the point that I think it would be impossible to keep her eyes closed from their weight.”

“And that’s not even getting into all the tattoos that Olivia has drawn on Mia’s face…”

“I can’t help but let out a snicker at the sight.”

O “You like?”

"Olivia turns towards me with a self-assured smile."[bt]

"For all my talk of people ignoring me, Olivia seems to be one of the few students actually taking more notice of me."

"It's weird. Olivia didn't want anything to do with me right when I started, but now it's like a switch got flipped…"[bu]

I “I mean, it’s funny, but how can she even breathe with all those nose rings?”

O “Oh, I kinda figured that Mia’s so full of hot air already that she doesn't need to breathe.”

I “What about the shoes? Don’t you think it’s a bit too much to give her such long toenails that they burst through the shoes?”

O “You really think Mia’s the type to take care of her nails in any way other than covering them up with nail polish?”

“I don’t know Mia nearly enough to say that’s the case.” [bv]

“But based on the Mia I do know, she doesn’t seem like the type to worry about fashion outside of what’s the most utilitarian.”

“I guess in a way that’s respectable.”

“Maybe really tomboyish, but respectable in its own right.”

I “Yeah. I don’t think Mia would care much about nail color.”

O “‘Course not. She’s the type to either paint her nails black or red and then leave the paint on until it chips away.”

“I glance towards Olivia’s own nails and notice that she doesn't seem to have any paint on her nails either, but they did at least look a bit glossy.”

“Didn’t think Olivia would be the type to do that, really.”

“Earlier in the year, she didn’t seem to care about anything.”

“Maybe she just needed some time to get into the rhythm of school things?”

“Probably thinking about it way too much.”

“Before Olivia and I can continue our conversation over her Mia doodle, a couple of students approach us.”

??? “Yo, Inco, my humie! Love the work you’ve been doing, especially your contest entry.”

??? “Yeah man, wasn’t expecting it to be so good considering you’re such a newbie!”

“...I’m just going to pretend that there wasn’t a veiled insult in there and take the compliment.”

“Though, with that in mind, I’m kind of surprised that they actually like my work.”

I “I mean, it’s nothing that great. Just something I put together at the last minute really.”

??? “Last minute?”

??? “Bro, you’re selling yourself way too short there!”

??? “Yeah, your work is genuinely amazing!”

O “Y-yeah.”

O “You should be a bit p-proud of yourself, Inco.”

O “You did great.”

“Olivia actually giving me some praise?”

“That’s new… and strange…”

I “Olivia… you like my submission too?”

“Olivia doesn’t answer right away, and instead opts to look away from me and our other classmates.”

O “‘Course I do, i-idiot!”[bw][bx]

O “You put so much effort into it and did your best with what you had and the limited time there was to submit it.”

O “Why wouldn’t I l-like it?”

“Again, hearing Olivia sing me such praises was… unusual.”

“But maybe, just maybe… this was the start of something new.”

“Yeah, I can almost feel it now.”

“Inco, greatest artist in all of St. Hammond…”

“Yeah… I like the ring of that.”

“I turn to look at Olivia with a slight smug grin on my lips, at which point she gives me a flat look.”

O “Okay, you did good, but don’t let it go to your head, Inco.”

“She adds to her statement by giving me a light jab on the chest with her elbow.”
#maybe move olivia quickly into inco slightly and then away, to signify the jab

“Ouch.”

I “Alright, alright.”

“Think she bruised something.”

“With that exchange behind us, Olivia and I get ready for class.”

“Idakan shows up like usual and he goes about his lesson in his usual passionate way.”[by]

I “Good morning, good morning!”

I “Now settle down, we’ve got announcements to go over.”

“I sit back in my seat, subtly feeling out the spot where Olivia smacked me to check.”

“Yep, bruised. Sheesh.”

“As the pale pteradon continued on reading from the announcement sheet like he did every day I found myself lost in my own thoughts.”

“Nothing else really happens that I’d consider out of the ordinary, things that are new, like the school itself, are finally starting to become mundane.”

“Though again, I can’t help but feel that Olivia’s sudden interest and positivity is… a bit off to me…”

#fade to the lunchroom (maybe slowly?)
#fade inco facing right, on the mid-left and olivia (happy maybe?) facing left on the mid-right

I “... then who ordered the fish?!”

“Olivia laughs so hard she snorts.”

“Her hands fly to her snout, trying to hide in embarrassment.”

“The display is enough to make me choke with my own laughter, and I have to try to keep bits of hamburger from flying out everywhere.”

O “That joke fucking [i]su-u-u-u-ucked[/i].”

“Olivia can barely talk, she’s laughing so hard.”[bz]

I “Didn’t sound like it sucked.”

O “Oh shut up!”

“It takes several more minutes before the two of us settle down.”

O “Heh, I’ve got one.”

I “Shoot.”

O “So, three brachiosauruses walk into a bar—-”

“Suddenly, Olivia stops.”

“She stops mid sentence as if she was struck down instantaneously.”

#Fade in Ben facing right, to the left of Inco
B “Ah, Inco! Just the man I wanted to see.”

“Olivia’s eyes drop back to her lunch and she immediately goes back to eating.”

“What the hell…?”

#flip inco to face Ben

I “Hey Ben, what’s up?”

B “I figured I’d come by and congratulate you on your submission entry.”

“This again?”

“I mean, it [i]is[/i] my best piece, but all the praise for it is still surprising.”

“It’s exhilarating, all these compliments and everything.”

I “Thanks man. Hey, maybe I’ll be the winner of the contest.”

I “What do you think Olivia?”

“The green gator girl flinches.”

“Ben shakes his head.”

B “Also, Olivia, great to catch you here.”

#pause while olivia rolls her eyes

B “Principal Scaler wanted me to remind you that you need to clean up after yourself.”

B “Leaving messes in classes can disrupt students in other periods.”

I “Scaler said that? Why not tell Olivia herself?”

B “She’s busy, you know how it is.”

“Olivia scoffs.”

I “Must not be that important, then.”

B “Inco, I just spent my entire lunch period cleaning up [i] her[i/] mess because [i]she’s[/i] not taking anything seriously.”

B “I’m not supposed to be Scaler’s errand boy, and I’m certainly not supposed to be a personal janitor.”

O “... Was it really that bad?”

B “Do you know how hard it is to scrub baking soda out from the carpet once it’s dried?”

B “Can you just try to not make others’ lives harder?”

#pause

I “Ben, what the hell?”

B “I… went too far there. I didn’t mean that.”

“Olivia tries shooting me an indifferent gaze.”

“It cracks a bit into embarrassment when I don’t return it.”

“She quickly rolls off on her own.”

B “... Man.”

“He pinches his brow and sighs.”

I “That bad?”

B “I was supposed to help Mia prep for a test.”

B “She’s definitely gonna give me an earful after school...”

I “Well, you should grab your lunch before-”

“I’m cut off by the blare of the school’s fake bell.”

“Ben just waves me off, already heading towards the empty lunch line.”

“I’m left feeling bad, but then again he’s the class president, I’m sure he’s used to this kinda stuff anyway.”

#Fade to hallway

“As I walk to history I pass by the hidden elevator that Olivia uses.”

“A part of me has been wanting to try it ever since I first saw it.”

“But Olivia took up all the space every time.”

"..."

"But the Baryonyx isn't here for once."

"I grin and push the button on the wall and wait patiently."

"After a moment the metal doors slide open and I step into the cramp space."

"Sheesh, I'm feeling a little claustrophobic just standing in it."

"Still, in for a penny."

"I hit the '2' button on the wall, and the silver doors shut behind me."

#Fade to black

"What the-"

"I guess the light in here doesn't work."

"[i]*Ka-chunk*[/i]"

"My heart drops as the space around me seems to drop for a split second."

"I'm in complete darkness, the sound of the worn out elevator mechanics filling it."

"..."

"..."

"How slow is this thing?!"

“Just as I consider lighting the room with my phone the room shudders again.”

“[i]*Ka-chunk*[/i]”

“Finally the doors open and I stumble out and away from the creepy contraption.”

“...And she has to use that thing daily?”

“I wonder if Mr. Farris knows about it. Is it even up to code?.”

M “-Wanted to talk with ya, ‘Livia.”

“I turn toward the voice, seeing Oliva and Mia nearby.”

#fade in Olivia center facing left, and Mia center facing right

#Olivia’s unimpressed
O “...”

Mia “Oh c’mon, don’t be such a square! I’m [i]tryin’[/i] to be nice here.”

“The grin on Mia’s face is jovial as she stands before the wheelchair bound baryonyx, her tail lazily swaying as she eyes Olivia.”

“Behind her is a crowd of similarly smiling parasaur girls, sharing quiet murmurs between each other and filling the rest of the hallway.”

“I can’t tell if they’re a crowd, or just her groupies…”

Mia “Ain’t that right?”

??? “Yeah, that’s right Mia!”

“Groupies it is.”

Mia “Ain’t she [i]sooo[/i] talented?”

Mia “Knowing your way ‘round an easel and some canvas?

Mia “You are, aren’tcha, ‘Livia?”

Mia “I can’t imagine how useless you must feel otherwise some days!”

Mia “I’m so glad you’re able to put those thoughts aside and paint some things you like!”

“Mia takes a step towards Olivia, her previous expression taking on a more ominous air.”

M “Yet, for all that talent ‘n… [i]untapped[/i] potential… you seem to lack some of the basics expected of a functional young adult...”

“Mia’s lips part, revealing a cruel grin.”

Mia “I hear you’ve been a [i]really[i/] dirty, messy little baby, leaving your food everywhere in class and getting it all over the place.”

M “They should stick you in a cute lil’ bib.”

“Her cronies holler and hoot, jeering loudly at Olivia.”

“Mia snaps her finger, causing all her lackeys to go quiet.”

“She then takes another step forward, her figure now looming over Olivia as she looks down with a cruel sneer on her lips.”

M “Ben was supposed to join me for lunch, but he had to stay behind to clean up after your mess.”

Mia “See, that’s a problem for me, ‘Livia.”

M “Do I need to start being a problem for you?”

??? “Yeah, does Ben look like your nanny?”

Mia “Well, she does already come with a stroller.”

??? “C’mon Mia, that’s crossing a line! After all, it’s not like she can… Get Up from that!”

Mia “What? I’m just chatting with ‘Liv here.”

Mia “But If I did hurt your feelings, I’m [i]wheely, wheely sworry![/i]”

“The pack of parasaurus peons snicker and chuckle at that one.”

“Well, some do. Judging by their faces it seems at least some of them aren’t entirely on board.”

??? “Hey, cut it out…”

??? “Just leave her alone…”

“Mia quickly turns sour.”

Mia “It’s just a lil bit a teasin’! She knows that!”

Mia “Right, Liv?”

Mia “We’re all just one big happy family here.”

Mia “Lord knows [i]some[/i] of us here could use one.”

I “Holy…”

“I don’t… I don’t even know what to say to that.”

“I also realize just how close I’ve gotten to the group when Mia’s head turns towards me.”

Mia “Well, well, if it ain’t basic baldie.”

Mia “Ya coming in to save the day or somethin’?”

“I flinch and then freeze.”

“All eyes are on me now.”

I “...”

Mia “Nothin’, huh?”

Mia “Figured as much from you.”

“Mia turns her attention back to Olivia and once again puts on a wide grin.”

Mia “Anyway, as I was sayin’ before we got interrupted.”

Mia “I was honestly thinking, ‘Liv, ya need a cooler nickname.”

O “...”

Mia “An’ your finhead friend, he told me a [i]real[/i] good one during gym the other day.”

O “...”

Mia “One ya used to have way back when, when you were just a wee hatchling.”

Mia “What was it, again?”

O “...”

Mia “Speak up, ‘Liv.”

O “...I don’t know.”

Mia “Sure you do.”

O “I… I don’t…”

Mia “If the finhead can remember it, so can you.”

“A murmur escapes from Olivia, barely audible but definitely spoken.”

Mia “Louder.”

#longer pause than normal

O “...hotwheels...”

#Mia bumps against olivia, as though patting her shoulder
Mia “Hotwheels! Thanks for remindin’ me, ‘Liv.”

Mia “Kinda fitting, I agree with half of it.”

“Olivia’s claws dig into her armrests.”

Mia “Maybe that’s the nuance, the point is that Only Half Of It Works.”

“Mia motions to the crowd, eliciting some more whispering among them.”

Mia “I’m sure you wouldn’t mind us making it cool again though, right?”

Mia “I mean, you were such a winner back then!”

“Mia leans in close, her voice now a harsh whisper as she glares daggers through Olivia.”

Mia “What’s wrong, Hotwheels? Don’t wanna talk anymore?”

Mia “Am I not good enough for you?”

“I can’t see Olivia’s face, but I can feel the pure hatred radiating from her.”

“Her tail arches low, as though about to strike.”

“Maybe I should step in? But what would I even say?”

“Isn’t it important I at least try?”

“Maybe I don’t even need to say anything, just be there for Olivia.”

“Might save me the embarrassment of public speaking, at least.”

“Whatever I do, I need to do it quick.”

“I don’t think Olivia is going to resist clawing Mia across the face for much longer…”

>> Intercede
>> Keep quiet (+1 Olivia)

>>Intercede
“Screw it, I can’t just stand here with my thumb up my ass.”
#fade in inco facing left, behind Olivia

I “Hey come on, knock it off Mia.”

Mia “Oh look, if it ain’t baldie coming in to save the day!”

Mia “Why don’t you mosey out of this one, new guy?”

Mia “Or are ya tryin’ to get more popular already?”

“I grit my teeth. I’m not doing this for popularity! I’m not…”

I “C’mon Mia, don’t be a jerk to Olivia!”

I “She’s already got a hard enough life, she doesn’t need you walking all over her.”

Mia “Oh shut the hell up, Inco.”

Mia “You’re just gonna walk up here and start spouting shit like a fuggin’ moron?”

I “How’d you like it if it was you, asshole?”

“Mia just laughs.”

“There’s no humor in it though.”

Mia “You really are a hopeless retard.”

Mia “Whatever, I’m done here.”

“I almost step forward to press my argument on, but Olivia grabs

my wrist.”

“She gives me an angry look, one that instantly makes my thoughts pause in their tracks.”[ca][cb]

“She doesn’t need to say anything for me to understand that she wants me to not make a fool of myself any more than I already have.”

“I almost ignore her plea… but those eyes of hers make me hesitate completely.”

“In the end, I give up my idea of continuing to argue with Mia, who had already left the scene with her group of followers anyway.”

“I turn to look at Olivia, who in turn scowls and wheels past me without a word.”

I “Olivia… are you-”

O “Not now, Inco.”

“Olivia’s reply is subdued and very low in both volume and energy.”

I “...”

I “I’m sorry…”

I “It’s just that… I couldn’t sit back and let Mia trash talk you like that.”

“Olivia stops in her tracks for a moment, her head turning back towards me."

"In her eyes, I don’t see any anger or sadness."

"Only disappointment."

O “I just…"

"Her citrine eyes are dowcast, her claws kneading the cheap leather of her armrest."

"It takes me a second to realize Olivia isn't talking to me."

O “Forget it."

“Olivia doesn’t even wait for me to say anything back to her request.”

“Her arms push roughly on the rims of her chair, which takes off down the hall without so much as giving anything or anyone the time of day.”

“...”

“Man, I really fouled that up, didn’t I?”[cc]

>>Convergence point

>> Keep quiet
“I’m really tempted to step up and say something to Mia, but after giving it a bit of thought, I decide that it’s best not to say anything.”

“This is not my battle to fight.”

“But that didn’t mean I couldn’t stand by Olivia and provide her the support she needed to face Mia down.”

“I walk past some of the crowd and stand right next to Olivia, who turns to look at me with equal parts surprise and dread.”

“I think a part of her fears that I’m about to say or do

something really stupid.”

“Instead, I merely put a hand on her shoulder and give the wheelchair bound girl a warm smile.”

Mia “Well, well, if it ain’t baldie.”

Mia “Ya coming in to save the day or somethin’?”

“I don’t give Mia a response, only shaking my head in reply.”

“That seems to catch Mia a bit off-guard, as the smile on her lips drops a bit as the gears in her mind visibly start to turn.”

“Mia turns her attention back to Olivia and once again puts on a wide grin.”

Mia “Anyway, as I was sayin’ before we got interrupted.”

Mia “I was honestly thinking, ‘Liv, ya need a cooler nickname.”

O “...”

Mia “An’ your finhead friend, he told me a [i]real[/i] good one during gym the other day.”

O “...”

Mia “Used to go by hotwheels. I think it’s pretty fitting, what about you lot?”

“Mia motions to the crowd, eliciting some more whispered giggles among them.”

“I can see Olivia’s ivory claws digging into her armrests at the nickname, but otherwise she maintains her apathetic leer.”

Mia “What’s wrong hotwheels? Don’t wanna talk?”

Mia “Am I not good enough for you to talk to now?”

O “...”

#Show mia unimpressed as she turns to face in the opposite direction with a joyous expression

Mia “See this? I try and try to be friendly.”

Mia “THIS is why you don’t have any real friends!”

#Show mia happy with fade left

Mia “Not like you had a chance of gettin’ any, anyways.”

“Olivia, what are you waiting for?”

“You can’t let Mia walk all over you like this…”

Mia “Nobody wants ta be friends with a cripple like ya!”

“I can hear the students in the crowd behind Mia suck in their breaths.”

“Olivia, come on! Waste this bitch! I’m right here, I’ll help you no matter what!”

O “...”

“Olivia gives Mia the most pained, saddened, but stony expression I’ve ever seen.”

“She shrugs.”

O “...I’m sorry you feel that way, Mia…”

#Have Olivia unimpressed flip center slide with fadeout to the left?

Mia “...What…?”

“Olivia doesn’t say anything else, she only turns around and begins to wheel herself down the hallway.”

“What’s more, the crowd of students that had gathered to hear Mia’s savage words all parted way to let the wheelbound gator through.”

“I wasn’t sure if I’d call that a show of respect or fear, but it was a show of something, that’s for sure.”

“I shoot Mia one final glance, noticing her previous smug expression all but shattered and replaced with one of confusion and anger before falling right behind Olivia.”

“Olivia is looking down at the ground as she wheels herself forward.”

“I can’t quite see her eyes, her hair casting a long shadow over them.”

“But that didn’t matter.”

“I could feel the pain radiating from her…”

>>Convergence point

“I hurry after Olivia, who continues toward our shared history class.”

“A part of me wants to catch up with her and ask her if she’ll be okay.”

“But Olivia would probably not say anything.”[cd][ce]

“Even when people are worried for her, she just… puts up that wall.”

“And the worst of it is not knowing anything…”

“If I should help, or if I can even help.”

“And why I feel the need to try…”

“I see Olivia steer away from our history class, turning down the hall and vanishing from my sight.”

“I consider following after her but…”

“...”

“Well, one way to help her would be to take notes for her too.”

“I recall the fact that she barely takes any notes in history to begin with.”

“I could at least help her out with some actual good notes, especially after she’s helped me out in Art Design.”

“...”

#Fade out

“After class I double check the notes I have for her.”

“It’d taken a lot longer, having to write twice as much so I could give Olivia her own copy of them.”

“And I cringe as I try to read my chicken-scratch writing on the

page.”

“Pen and paper are definitely not my forte.”

#Fade in school front, Damien, Liz and Olivia on the far left and Inco on the far right

“As I step out of the school and into the blistering afternoon air, I lay eyes on my three friends huddled as a group.”

“At first, I was expecting them to be chatting away like they normally would be, but as I approached, I noticed that something in the air didn’t quite feel right.”

“Damien is once again talking both of the girls’ ears off, but he doesn’t quite seem to be his cheery self.”

“If anything, he seems a bit desperate with his words and body language.”

“Meanwhile, Olivia just seems to be spacing out entirely, not even bothering to look at either Damien or Liz.”

“Liz is the first to actually notice me, her head beelining toward me and away from the pink-frilled noisemaker.”

L “Inco!”

I “Hey Liz, what’s Damien talking about?”

L “He’s been-”

“At Liz’s words, Damien’s attention turns to me.”

D “Inco!!”

D “You believe me, right?!”

D “I didn’t mean for any of that to happen!”

I “Uh… what are you talking about exactly?”

L “Word about earlier got around.”

L “I was with Damien when we’d heard, I’ve never seen him turn so pale.”

“Damien’s leaning over an unresponsive Olivia, hand’s spread in supplication.”

L “Heard you were there, too.”

I “I… was, yeah.”

I “Mia said she’d heard some name from Damien earlier.”

D “She didn’t say she’d use it for something so unscrupulous!”

L “You don’t know what that means.”

D “Who cares?!”

D “Inco, really, I didn’t mean for any of that to happen!”

I “I believe you man, calm down.”

I “I’m not even part of any of this.”

[Add something here to connect without it sounding too jarring]

D “You loved that nickname way back when we were kids.”

#Olivia pauses before speaking

O “Yeah, well, we aren't kids now, are we?”

D “What are you talking about, have things really changed that much?”

D “I didn’t know I wasn’t supposed to bring it up!”

D “I had fun back then, too!”

L “Damien, cool off a sec.”

D “No! I want to know!”

D “Why do you hate all our time together?!”

D “That was the best time of my life!”

O “... Just don’t see myself that way anymore...”

#Damien’s stature changes

O “And you’re right, that was the best time of my life.”

O “That’s why I don’t want [i]her[/i] talking about it.”

O “The name ‘Hotwheels’ belongs to ten-year-old me.”

O “Not current me.”

“Olivia stares at Damien for a while before breaking contact to glance at Liz and I.”

I “Why not?”

#the rest turn one by one to face Inco

“Wait, did I say that?”

“... Why did I ask that? It just kind of came out.”

“Liz notices Damien’s still organizing his thoughts.”

“Seeing as neither of the others are going to answer coherently, she sighs.”

L “Well, I wasn’t around for this, but…”

L “When they were freshmen in middle school, Damien and Olivia would take the bus every weekend to an arcade in the city.”

L “I guess he came up with the nickname around then, and it stuck.”

D “Err…”

D “That’s half right, but I didn’t come up with it.”

D “I’d brought a chunk of change for us to play stuff with each other.”

D “A match on just about anything there was a quarter, probably still is.”

D “But I don’t think I won even once that day.”

D “Once she stood to win something, it’s like a switch went off in her head.”

D “I’d never seen Olivia get like that.”

D “Some of the teenagers were watching, too. They saw everything.”

D “A couple challenged her once I ran out of cash, and sure enough…”

D “She ended up clearing house all afternoon.”

D “It was all she’d talk about at school all week until we could go back for more.”

D “Only took like, a month for her to be recognized as some local champion.”

D “Sometime along the way people started calling her Hotwheels, don’t remember really who or when.”

D “But I do know it’s proof she’s got that fire in her.”

O “...”

I “Wow… Yeah, that’s…”

“Uh… I kinda feel bad now since I wasn’t paying much attention...”

“Thankfully, the words are still fresh enough in my mind that I’m able to both catch up to the conversation and actually contribute to it.”

I “Hey, that’s a great story.”

I “Why are you so morose about it though?”

I “To be recognized so well that you get a cool nickname? To be a winner and champion like that sounds amazing.”

I “Why all the disdain for the nickname?”

O "...I'm not."

I "What?"

O "...I'm not a winner anymore."

L "Because you don't go to the arcade anymore? If it's the one I'm thinking of, it's only, like, a half-hour away."

"Olivia looks at Liz like she just recommended everyone watch the newest Netsticks anime."

I "Well, if this story's anything to go by, I'd like to see you be a winner again."

"A loud thump draws our attention to Olivia, whose tail had just hit the floor."

"And it looks like her jaw would've hit too if it was possible."

I "And I'm sure these guys want to see it too."

I "Damien's the one that dragged you to our lunch table all this time, right?

I "Look at him, he's nearly keeled over because he's afraid of losing that part of you."

I "And Liz…"

L "And I think I'd like to see why you and Damien are really close friends."

I "Yeah…"

"And just as quick as I gained the bravado to speak up, any words

left me immediately.”

I “Um…”

“Think I accidentally put Olivia on the spot there.”

“Whups.”

#olivia’s embarrassed
O “... Well…”

“Her tail rolls along the ground a bit in contemplation.”

O “If you guys really care that much about it…”

O “I wouldn’t mind it from you guys.”

“All at once Damien lights up.”

D “Y-yes!”

D “Alright! Hotwheels is back!”

O “‘You guys’ now refers to Liz and Inco.”

D “Ha, ha…”

“Damien’s shoulders drop for a moment, but he quickly recovers.”

D “Hey, if we’re getting the name out again, we should go visit the arcade together sometime!”

O “I’d rather not.”

D “Okay then how about a better name? Like-”

“Damien’s words flood out as he contemplates new nicknames for Olivia to try and appease her, many of which are shot down by her or leave Liz and I chuckling at the scene.”

#Scene fade out

"Gradually, our giggles died down and the four of us chatted a bit more about the day in general.”

“But eventually, Damien and Liz headed their respective ways home, leaving just me and Olivia all alone in the hall."

"Most of the school has filtered out into the front yard or to their afterschool activities, and I've got a backpack full of homework calling my name."

"Olivia offers to roll with me, as it's not too much out of her way."

O "I'm sure someone would beat you up and take your lunch money if I didn't."

#this is where the Hotwheels CG would start

"There's plenty of time to make it to the next train, so the two of us take it easy."

"We chat back and forth, Olivia's one squeaky wheel providing a backing track to our discussion."

"Squeak…Squeak…Squeak…"

"One badly in need of some grease."

"The sun finally managed to break through the autumn clouds, making the walk almost unseasonably warm."

I "Is it always this hot around here?"

O "What?"

O "Oh yeah, I forgot you're not from around here."

O "I don't know what you're complaining about, dork. This feels great!"

"Olivia gives her chair an extra hard push, letting herself glide by unaided for long enough to stretch out her arms to bask in the sunlight."

I "I might have figured you'd like the heat."

O "Oh what, because I'm a dino?"

I "N-no, not like that!"

O "I'm just playing!”

O “Relax."

O "You're pretty touchy on that stuff, aren't you?"

"The two of us finally make it to the train platform, nestled as it is off the main street."

"I can see the train a few blocks away, our walk timed up with its arrival perfectly."

I "I just think it's important to be educated, is all."

O "Even if you're, what, the only human at our school?"

"Olivia flashes me a cheeky grin as my train pulls up."

"Her demeanor is night and day from what it was before."

"I've got to admit, but her mischievous nature is a little infectious…"

"As the train doors open, I leave Olivia with one final jab, something I know she'd appreciate."

I "Hey, whatever you say, hotwheels."

"Oh man, the look on her face is priceless!"

"Laughing, I neatly dodge out of the way of her slashing claws, stepping smartly onto the train as the doors close."

O "INCO YOU SON OF A BITCH!

O "GET BACK HERE!"

"As the doors ding shut behind me, I can see an irate, and still blushing, Olivia waving her fist as the train begins to pull away."

"Still giggling, I manage to squeeze myself into a seat next to a yellow-scaled woman smelling faintly of hotdogs."

"You know, I may pay for that comment later…"

"...But the look on Olivia's face definitely made it worth it."

#Scene black with dissolve

"..."

--Chapter End--

Chapter 5
Oct 5
A month later, it seems Inco has a decent chance at winning the art contest. The results of the semifinals would be announced later that day. During 3rd period, Ben and Inco are discussing this on the way to the auditorium. Once there, Inco seeks out Olivia to sit with her. Liz is several rows back but her head is up front. Scaler takes the stage and announces the winter dance, and then closes with the five semifinalists. Inco's name is displayed under a picture he did not draw. It now starts to occur to Inco that people weren't praising his work at all. The assembly is dispersed, and everyone goes to lunch. Liz is disappointed her work didn't make the cut. Inco's upset, Liz and Damien try and figure out what's going on. Inco notices Olivia's gone from the table. Damien mentions she was upset earlier that day as well. Inco goes looking for Olivia.

He finds Olivia in Iadakan's room. She confesses she swapped out Inco's submission to the contest several weeks prior. Inco's upset at first, but then cools off when he sees how distraught she is. Olivia apologizes to Inco, and the player can have Inco accept the apology or demand an explanation.
Accepting the apology skips to the end of the scene.
Demanding an explanation has Olivia dig deeper into her own feelings and motivations for her actions and behavior. (+1 inco (inco overcoming his failure of taking things at face value))
There is a followup decision of Inco choosing to let it rest or call out olivia.
Letting it rest skips to the end of the scene.
Calling out olivia has inco gently reprimand olivia, reminding her that he wasn't the only one affected by her shenanigans (+1 olivia (has olivia realize her own culpability in others' wellbeing))

After school, the main four bury the hatchet. If inco had called her out, olivia will apologize to liz.

preamble here describing how inco had his submission pulled from the contest for 'uncited' reasons and olivia after confessing to iadakan had to detention 'or something'

Chapter 5

“As the school year progresses, the days start to feel like they’re moving along much faster.”

"A part of it may be the change of the season and weather, however slight that change may be."

"While the calendar said it was officially Fall, the only thing I've really noticed was the increasing number of clouds in the sky."

"Still, things have started to be routine for me."

"Wake up, walk to the train, be uncomfortable around Mr. Ferris at the train station…"

"Suffer through gym class with Damien and Mia, talk with Olivia and Ben just before Mr. Iadakan's lectures, watch Liz lose her mind tutoring Damien at lunch…"

"And in the interim, I get asked by classmates about my contest entry."

"Word of mouth from all of them is that I'm probably gonna win, making me excited that my piece is doing so well."

[(something something "i didn't expect to do so well, odd, but i'll take it)]

"I'm giddy with anticipation as Mr. Iadakan leads our class to the auditorium."

B "What's with the smile, Inco?"

B "You've had it since this morning."

I "Well, they're gonna announce the winner of the contest now, right?"

B "Now?"

"Ben pauses to ponder."

I “I mean, why else are we all going to the auditorium right now instead of during home room?”

B “Oh, well actually it’s because Ms. Scaler was busy this morning with a meeting.”

I “Really? Wait, should you really be telling me?”

B “I don’t see why not.”

B “I always see you walking into school with the guy she was having a talk with.”

“Should [i]I[/i] be talking about Mr. Farris in that case?”

B “He’s sat in on a couple of the student council meetings.”

B “Makes things really awkward.”

I “Yeah, he was in my History class last week too.”

“I felt sorry for Mr. Triggums.”

“I think he had a serious rash or something that day because he kept scratching at his neck and chin.”

B “I think the assembly’s gonna be about him, honestly.”

I “Ah, well…”

I “That kinda dampens the mood. I was hoping to see the results of the contest and all…”

B “Yeah, I mean I’m anxious too.”

B “I REALLY wanna win.”[cf]

B “It’d make a great addition to my college applications.”

I “What?”

“Isn’t it a bit soon to be thinking that?”

B “Yeah, just another achievement to add on.”

B “I mean, Lizbeth was hoping to use it for her application as well.”

I “I didn’t know she’d entered too.”

“Our monochrome teacher stops the class just before the auditorium, where the rest of the student body were busy trying to cram into.”

Iad “Okay class, this assembly is going to go long, so don’t worry about assigned seating or anything.”

Iad “After it’s done it’ll be lunch time.”

“Ah, so that’s why he told us to take our stuff.”

“Crap.”

“Well, I’m sure he’ll be in his class after, I’ll just grab it after I eat.”

“The pale ptero starts moving back towards his classroom, but stops near Ben.”

“He leans over and whispers something into the student president’s ear, who nods in response.”

“Finally with a smile he waves and leaves us to the struggling

crowd trying to filter into the cramped theater of the school."

"Since we can sit pretty much anywhere, I try to seek out Olivia among the crowd of dino and dino-adjacent students."

"You'd think finding a gator girl in a wheelchair would have been easy, but the task proves just a bit harder than expected."

"I end up having to stand on one of the chairs to get a good look around."

"Of course, the first thing I spot is Liz, her head sticking way above just about everyone else's in the vicinity."

"Maybe Olivia's sitting next or near her?"

"I jump down from my impromptu perch and make my way towards her."

I "Hey Liz."

L "Oh, hey Inco. What's up?"

"I look around her to see if Olivia's anywhere near, but the only other familiar face I see is Damien, who is a few chairs over and is currently too busy reading a magazine to realize how close I am."

I "Say, you happen to know where Olivia is?"

L "Probably near the front row, where the handicapped seating is."

"Of course, why didn't I think about that?"

I "Thanks Liz!"

"I give Liz a quick wave and head down the aisle towards the

front row.”[cg]

“Just as Liz had theorized, Olivia is sitting there next to an empty seat labeled with the handicapped sign looking somewhat miserable.”

“I guess massive assemblies like this must remind her of just how different she is from everyone else…”

“I approach Olivia with as warm a smile as I can muster.”

I “Hey Olivia.”

O “Oh, hey Inco.”

O “What are you doing here?”

I “Well… I came by to sit with you.”

O “...”

“Olivia doesn’t really say anything in response to that, opting instead to let out a small scoff and turn her sight away from me.”

O “...Not like you need my permission...”[ch]

“I take her words as my cue and take the seat right next to her wheelchair.”

“One of the benefits of being in the handicapped zone is just how close it is to the front of the auditorium”

“We are practically front and center.”

“Still though, I can’t imagine how it must feel to Olivia that the only reason she can get such a good seat in the house is because she’s disabled.”

“Especially with how proud she is about proving how her condition doesn’t make her any weaker or different from everyone else.”

O “...”

O “...Thanks for… keeping me company though…”

“Olvia’s words kind of catch me off-guard.”

I “Hey, that’s what friends are for!”

“Olivia snorts and rolls her eyes.”

O “Okay, okay, don’t make it too sappy now.”

“The two of us share a small laugh as we begin to settle and get comfortable with our place in the auditorium.”[ci]

“We almost don’t notice when Ms. Scaler steps up to the podium and asks for everyone to settle down.”

Scal “Okay everyone, got a whole bunch of important announcements to make, so I’ll make them quick so we can all have an early lunch.”

“Soon as the idea of going for an early lunch is brought up by Ms. Scaler, the entire room goes as silent as vigil.”

“Never underestimate the power of hungry teens I guess.”
[cj]

“Over the next fifteen minutes, Ms. Scaler goes over important events coming up in the school year.”

“Most I would consider standard things, like pep rallies for the sports teams, or bake sales to fund-raise for upcoming field trips, and even something about new clubs being formed, such as

the ‘Japanese Animation APPreciation Society.’”

“Not the best acronym, if I had to say.”

“Otherwise, it’s all mostly boring housekeeping stuff when one got right down to it.”

“I almost wonder why such announcements warranted an assembly when the mood suddenly shifts with Scaler’s next big announcement.”

Scal “Now that we got the main stuff out of the way, I have two last yet very important announcements to make.”

Scal “The first is this year, we have obtained not only increased funds for it, but we will go all out as far as music and catering is concerned for this year's Winter Formal Dance.”

Scal “You can expect live music, fine food and drinks, and plenty of extra surprises!”

“The room almost explodes with rapturous cheers the instant Scaler makes that announcement.”

“Even Olivia seems to perk up at the mention of the upcoming dance.”

“I guess the Winter Formal’s really popular around these parts.”

“That’s a big contrast from my old school, which didn’t really hold such grand balls, instead opting for smaller scale gatherings that never really went above two hundred students at a time.”

Scal “Further details on the Winter Formal are coming, so keep an eye out for those in the coming weeks.”

Scal “Now, on to the second big announcement.”

Scal “St. Hammond is proud to announce the five semifinalists for the Yearbook Cover Art contest!”

“Even more uptous cheers and applause break out.”

“So loud is the noise that it kind of makes my ears ring.”

“Still, I’d be lying if I said I also wasn’t excited for the reveal of just who had made it to the semifinals.”

“Maybe I was giving myself a bit too much credit, but I REALLY wanted to be among those semifinalists.”

“I can almost taste victory, in fact…”

“I turn to face Olivia and prepare to cheer alongside her, but I’m stopped in my tracks when I notice that unlike the rest of her peers, Olivia seemed to be uneasy about the prospect.”

“Almost scared, even…”

“Before I can ask Olivia why her sudden change in mood, Scaler continues with her next words, cutting my train of thought off.”

Scal “And here we have the five semifinalists!”

“The pictures of the five skillful students who had beaten all the other competitors came up, followed by the piece that had allowed them to claim such a victory right above them.”

“As soon as my picture appears, my eyes go wide…”

“The piece is amazing, the colors blending wonderfly and the figures beautifully designed.”

“I’d honestly call it a masterpiece if I was an art critic.”[ck]

“I can only stare in shock as the student body claps for the

painting on the projector screen, some even whistling and shouting my name."

"Applauding a painting that isn't mine."

"This whole time…"

"How?"

"I find myself sinking deeper and deeper into my seat."

"This entire time and it wasn't even my photograph…"

"While Ms. Scaler continues the rest of the assembly, I'm too lost in thought about everything that's happened around me this past month."

"I'm a fraud."

"A charlatan."

"I've been taking credit for someone else's work."

"I don't even know whose work that is."

"As I stare at the final contest entry on full display all I can think is 'why?'"

"Why replace my piece."

"Why not just enter it normally."

"Why did this happen to me?"[cl]

"..."

“As I keep mentally screaming why, Ms. Scaler dismisses us for lunch.”

“I’m left in my seat, head slowly sinking into my hands, as the rest of the student body shuffles out of the auditorium.”

"My own body feels numb as I let the flush of students carry me along to the cafeteria."

“I go into the food line and get my meal without so much as even giving it a thought.”

"I don’t even stop to talk to Liz or Damien as I pass them by both in the hall and line."

"Hell, I don’t even talk to Olivia…"

"Wait…"

"What?"

"She was right behind me, wasn't she?"

"Yeah, I swear I heard that squeaky wheel of hers as I left the auditorium."

"How did a hundred and fifty pound gator strapped to a metal chair give me the slip?"

"Maybe…"

"...Our lunch table?"

"I perk up a bit as I navigate the usual riotous lunchroom, dodging half-eaten goats and worse as I pick my way to the back."

"..."

"It seems my mood has spread."

"Liz's neck hangs slack around her shoulders as she morosely picks at her salad."

"Not even Damien's infectious mood has survived."

D "Come on Liz, it's just a stupid art contest!"

"Liz just sighs, like she's heard this a thousand times."

L "Damien, like I said, this art contest could've been my big chance to be seen…"

"Liz's neck sags lower."

L "Instead I didn't even make the final cut..."

"Each word out of her mouth is like a dagger lobbed directly at my heart."

D "C'mon, Liz, it'll be okay!"

D "Look, you've even got Inco down!"

#flip Liz's head towards Inco

L "Geez, Inco, you do look down."

L "Wait, what do you have to be upset about? You made it into the semi's!"

"Another twist of the knife, Liz."

"Shit, what do I even say?"

"That the reason why everyone loves me is all a big lie?"[cm]

"That my popularity is a joke?"

I "Uh, i-it's just that…"

"Olivia's normal spot next to me gives me the excuse I need."

I "I-I'm just worried about Olivia, is all."

"My words taste bitter. I can't believe I'm using her as an excuse…"

D "Hmm, yeah, where is she?"

D "You'd think she'd be here, bad-mouthing everyone's submissions and calling them a bunch of-"

L "Damien!"

#shocked Damien

D "What?"

D "Oh, nonono!”

D “It looked good on you, Liz!"

I "I didn't see her after the assembly…"

I "And I know she didn't enter anything for the contest."

I "Maybe she's feeling left out, or something?"

#thinking Damien

D "Now that you mention it, she seemed kinda down in Ms. Prockling's class."

D “I wonder if it’s a leftover from Mia’s bullying earlier today.”[cn]

L “Could be, though I kinda doubt it since she seemed pretty good about moving past that whole affair.”

“Now that Liz mentions it, Olivia did seem to be acting strange lately.”

“I just hope it’s not something I said or did…”

I “I’ma go look for Olivia.”

D “You sure, dude?”

D “What about lunch!”

I “I’m not hungry.”

D “Oh.”

D “Can I have your food then?”

L “Damien, I swear-”

D “What!?”

D “He said he’s not hungry!”

L “...”

L “Inco, do you need some help looking for Olivia?”

“I give Liz’s question some thought, but in the end, I really can’t be around her right now without being reminded of the fact that I’m a no-good fraud…”

I “It’s okay, Liz.”

I “I got this.”

I “You just… enjoy your lunch and don’t worry about anything.”

“Liz looks like she wants to object, but I give her a pleading look.”

“In the end, she lets out a sigh and slumps back on her seat, looking both dejected yet giving me a nod of understanding.”

“I nod back, and after sliding my tray of food towards Damien, take off in search of my wheelchair-bound gator friend.”

“It really doesn’t strike me until I’m out in the hallway and looking around aimlessly that I don’t really know where to even start looking for Olivia.”

“She wasn’t in the cafeteria, and I couldn’t think of many other places where she would be.”

“It wasn’t like she made a habit of going to other spots in the school.”

“Not that she had many other places she wanted to hang out in.”

“I stop for a second to really think about it.”

“If I was Olivia, where would I go to find some peace, quiet, and solidarity?”

“...”

“I can think of one place and only one place where I’d find her.”

“Without wasting another second, I head there.”

“Thankfully, because it’s lunchtime, the halls aren’t as packed as they are during in-between periods, so I’m able to make it to my destination in less than five minutes.”

“Iadakan’s room.”

“The only other place that I can conceivably think to find Olivia in.”

“With an exhale, I reach for the door handle and turn the knob.”

“The door swings inwards silently, and my gaze instantly falls on both Olivia and Iadakan sitting across from each other.”

“The two sport sour faces, which instantly confirms my fears that something did happen with Olivia…”

Iad “-worth it, Olivia? What you did-”

O “I HAD TO!”

“Her voice is raw as she cuts off her favorite teacher.”

O “I had to do it…”

O “I needed to know…”

“Her voice catches and she finds herself gripping the armrests of her chair.”

Iad “I’ve already told you that you’re talented, Olivia.”

“The pale pteradon pinches the bridge of his snoot.”

Iad “If you wanted you could be in a more advanced set of classes.” [co]

Iad “You’d need only apply yourself.”

O “You’re the only teacher worth a damn here, Mr. Iadakan!”

O “Everyone else just looks at me and sees me as a failure waiting to happen!”

“Tears prick at the gator girl’s eyes, and I feel my stomach sink at the sight.”

“Mr. Iadakan moves from his desk and places a comforting hand on her shoulder.”

Iad “You know that isn’t true, Olivia.”

Iad “What they see is a shy student-”

O “THAT’S STUCK IN A WHEELCHAIR!”

“The roar makes me flinch, but our teacher is unperturbed.”

“Iadakan sighs and pinches the bridge of his snoot.”

Iad “That’s an excuse, Olivia, and you know it.”

Iad “You’ve got so much talent and potential, but you’re floundering in most of your classes and being given shitty remedial work because you don’t apply yourself at all beyond your art.”

Iad “Why would you waste your skills on such a stupid prank in the first place!?”

“Olivia glowers at that[cp].”

O “It wasn’t a prank.”

O “In fact, Inco should be happy that he’ll win that stupid contest!”

“Happy? How would this make me happy?!”

Iad “Oh?”

O “Yeah! It’s a win-win for both of us!”

O “He gets to win, and people will finally appreciate my work!”

“Oh.”

Iad “So he was in on this entire charade?”

Iad “When he’d already submitted his own piece?”

“Our teacher moves back to his desk and picks up a sheet of photo paper from the desk.”

“I can’t really make out what it is from where I’m at, but it looks like an outdoor shot.”

“Olivia seems to freeze when she’s shown the picture.”

O “Y-yeah, of course Inco knew.”

O “Why wouldn’t he?”

Iad “Are you sure about that?”

“Olivia’s real quiet after Iadakan’s words.”

“I’m half tempted to barge in and make myself known, but In the end I decide that it’s best if I don’t intrude on them.”

“I quietly back away from the door and lean against the wall opposite of it.”

“As I do, I keep asking myself why Olivia would pull such a stunt.”

“It doesn’t matter how much I ponder it, it just doesn’t make any sense…”

“...”

“I close my eyes and let out a sigh.”

“And here I thought I was finally getting to know the real Olivia…”

Iad “Inco.”

“Iadakan’s words suddenly pull me back to reality as I turn to face him.”

I “Mr. Iadakan!”

I “I uh…”

Iad “How much did you hear?”

I “...”

I “...Olivia did something… bad?”

“I don’t want to get in trouble for eavesdropping.”

“With a put-upon sigh he places a hand on my shoulder.”

Iad “Inco… cut the act.”

Iad “You know Olivia switched your entry with her own art piece.”

I “I… I mean…”

“Iadakan raises a hand, cutting off whatever words I had planned on saying.”

“Instead, he holds out the photo I turned in for my contest entry.”

“It’s a printed version of it.”

“I take it and look at it carefully.”

“It looks… cleaner than what I’d originally submitted.”

“The features are in sharper focus, and the little errors I remembered from the original shot are completely absent, there’s not even a hint of blurring from when I had tried to remove them.”

Iad “Check the backside.”

“I flip the sheet over and it’s covered in notes.”

“Each bullet point highlighting a different CavePaint tool and how he’d used it.”

Iad “Just some future tips when it comes to using CavePaint, Mr. Nito.”

Iad “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve a principal to speak with about properly securing the school’s drive.”

Iad “In the meantime…”

“Iadakan glances over to the classroom door.”

Iad “I think you and Olvia need to have a heart to heart.”

“He places a hand on my shoulder.”

Iad “Be honest. With her and yourself.”

“With a final wink the old man sets down the hall for the Principal’s office, leaving me standing alone in front of his classroom.”

“...”

“I let out a weary sigh.”

“I really don’t want to do this… but at the same time, I can’t just let it stand as is.”

“I could just walk away from this.”

“But then what would that say about my relationship with Olivia?”

“We are friends at this point, and friends don’t lie or cheat on each other.”

“...”

“I need to know the truth…”

“I reach for the door handle and, after taking a deep breath to steady myself, swing open the door.”

“The instant I take a step in, Olivia’s eyes are on me.”

“I can see the panic in her eyes as I finish entering Iadakan’s room.”

I “Hey, Olivia. I was wondering if you were okay?”

“She tries her best to avoid eye contact with me.”

O “I’m fine.”

I “You don’t sound like it.”

O “What do you care!?”

“I can’t help but feel offended as she casually throws the pleasantries back in my face.”’

#inco angry

I “Because I thought we were friends!”

“Her frown turns into a grimace, and she continues to refuse eye contact with me.”

#inco armscrossed?

I “There is also another matter I wanted to talk to you about…”

“I placed the photo Iadakan had given me on her lap.”

“As soon as the photo hits her lap, Olivia flinches like the piece of paper weighed several dozen pounds.”

I “Why did you replace my submission with yours?”

O “...”

O “...Why does it matter to you…?”

O “Now you actually have a chance at winning the art contest...”

O “Isn’t that what you wanted?”

I “O-Of course I want to win, but I want my submission to win, not yours!”

O “I… I…”

“Olivia takes a deep breath of her own.”

O “I thought you’d just like the attention!”

“My mind drifts back to the auditorium, and the dozens of voices cheering my name.”

“She’s right.”

“I did like the attention, at least until I realized it wasn’t my photograph.”

#inco neutral

I “You thought I’d be okay with that?”

I “You really think I’m that bad?”

#olivia sad

O “N-No, I swapped them out weeks ago!”

O “That was before I knew you.”

I “Even then, why would you do that to someone you don’t even know?”

“Olivia visibly deflates, but after a few moments she finally looks up at me.”

O “I’m really sorry, Inco.”

O “I didn’t mean to hurt you...”

“That doesn’t answer my question.”

“But Olivia did apologize, so maybe I shouldn’t be so harsh on her.”

“She’s clearly dealing with a lot, and I don’t want to put any more pressure on someone who’s already struggling.”

>>accept her apology

I “Apology accepted then.”

“Olivia nods and sags in her chair.”

“I think she’s had enough emotional trouble today.”

I “What about you, Olivia?”

O “What about me?”

I “You look like you’ve been through alot, and class is gonna be starting soon.”

I “Do you need me to push you there?”

“Olivia rolls her eyes and sighs.”

O “Y’know what, sure.”

O “I just wanna sleep in Mr. Triggums’ class right now.”

>>Convergence point

>>demand an explanation (+1 Inco)
“I don’t like this situation one bit, but I also don’t want to push it any further than it already has gone.”

“It wouldn’t really do anything except cause undue stress for everyone involved.”

“Not to mention the fact that Olivia seems pretty broken up about it as is.”

“...”

“Still, there’s just something I don’t quite understand about Olivia’s motivations… and If I don’t get to the bottom of ‘em, I don’t think I’ll ever be able to move on from it properly…”

I “...Olivia…”

I “...”

I “...I’ll accept your apology on the condition that you tell me why you did it?”

“Olivia’s eyes widened at my words.”

“She then scowls and fixes me with a glower.”

O “What does it matter!?”

O “I already apologized!”

O “Isn’t that enough!?”

I “No it's not.”

“I take a deep breath and steel myself for what’s to come.”

I “Olivia, I want to move past this, I really do.”

I “But I need to know [i]why[/i].”

I “Why enter your work under a name that isn’t yours…? And why me of all people in St. Hammond…?”

O “...”

“Olivia lets out a sigh and wheels herself closer to me.”

O “The second question’s easy to answer.”

O “I picked you because you were the new kid in school.”

O “No one knew who you were, nor what you were capable of.”[cq]

O “A literal blank slate for me to use.”

O “Not like I could stick my art under Damien or Liz’s name… the judges would have known right away that it wasn’t their work.”

“I guess that does make some sense.”

“With me being the new kid on the block, Olivia’s art could go undetected far easier than with someone else already established here in St. Hammond.”

“Doesn’t stop it from being wrong… but I can now see why Olivia

would be willing to risk such a move…”

I “...Okay.”

=>accept her words

I “Thanks for telling me that, Olivia. I get what you mean.”

“She nods back.”

“She doesn’t really need to answer the first one, anyway.”

“What I’d overheard between her and Mr. Iadakan made it clear enough that it’s a touchy subject for her.”

“And what right do I have to pry into Olivia’s personal life.”

O “So where does that leave us?”

I “Well, I don’t really know.”

O “Well it leaves me exhausted, honestly.”

“Olivia leans back in her chair and yawns loudly.”

I “In that case, why don’t I push you to class?”

“She cracks open one eye to stare at me.”

I “I can’t imagine how tiring it is for your arms.”

O “...you get used to it honestly.”

“Olivia hums as she thinks it over.”

O “Fine, sure. I just want to sleep in Mr. Triggums’ class right now.”

>>Convergence point

=>Go further
I “That answers one of the questions.”

I “What about the other?”

O “What about it?”

“Olivia sneers and looks away.”

O “What’s done is done and Mr. Iadakan is having the entry pulled so it doesn’t even matter.”

I “It still matters to me, that was MY work, and it’s MY reputation!”

"Olivia scoffs."

O “Must be nice to have a good reputation...”

I “What’s that supposed to mean?”

O “Oh, come the hell on, Inco! Even someone as DENSE as you should be able to see how I’m treated!”

I “How you are treated? All I see are good people-er, dinos-doing whatever they can to make sure YOU are comfortable, safe, and happy!”

O “You don’t know that, you bald excuse for a caveman!”

O “You don’t see how they look down on me for not having working legs!”

O “You don’t feel their scorns and their jeers over how poor little Olivia can’t do anything without it being spoon-fed to her!”

I “And what’s so wrong about getting a helping hand every once in a while?”

O “They don’t give me a helping hand!”

O “They try to carry me everywhere because they think I can’t do anything on my own!”

O “They think I’m broken and have to be looked over, cared for, treated like I’m some kind of glass sculpture that would shatter at even the most minute of touches!”

O “I can’t do anything without someone giving me praise for ‘beating the odds’!”

O “I can’t go anywhere without someone asking if I need help or if I’d rather they do it for me!”

O “I can’t even make friends without them feeling pity because I can’t keep up with them!”

O “All throughout my childhood, I was different, I was the outsider, I was the odd girl out because I couldn’t use my bloody legs!”

“Olivia bites her lower lip so hard that I see a small trail of blood flow down her chin and into her sweater.”

O “And what made it worse is that I couldn’t run home to the comforting embrace of my mother or father…”

O “...First because I can’t bloody run, then because my father’s never really home, and finally because my mother up and left me not long after I was born for, guess what? Being a bloody cripple!”[cr]

“The gator girl slams a fist down the armrest of her wheelchair, causing the metal to dent a bit from the force of the impact.”

O “I don’t want to be handled with kiddie gloves anymore!”

O “I don’t want to get special treatment because others think that I need it or because they fear I’ll fail if they don’t!”

O “I want people to take my work and my skills for their real value!”

O “I want people to see ME—not my bloody chair! Not my bloody condition! Not even my bloody social standing—ME! Olivia!”

“The gator girl finally unfurls her clenched fists.”

“Soon as she does, I notice the bloodstains on the tip of her claws.”

“My attention is then taken by the fact that whatever rage she seemed to have had is suddenly replaced when she lets out a soft sniff.”

“It is at that point that I notice that her eyes are shimmering with tears…”

O “It’s just not fair, Inco…”

O “No one in this damned school takes me seriously because of what I am…”

O “That’s why I did it; that’s why I tried to pass my entry as yours.”

O “Because I wanted to see for once in my bleeding life if people actually thought my art was good on its own merit, or if they only pretended to like it so as to not hurt poor ‘lil crippled Olivia’s feelings…”

"Olivia's eyes start shimmering again as she slumps forward."

"The heat is out of her words now, and it's clear that whatever fire inside her that fueled this argument is spent."

O "So I'm sorry Inco."

O "I'm sorry I ruined your submission."

O "I'm sorry that I felt like I needed it."

O "It's because of these that I…"

"Oliva's claws dig into her legs, hard enough for small pinpricks of red to start glistening on the ends."

O "I'm sorry…"

"Without thinking, I kneel down until we're eye-to-eye."

"I take her claws in my hands, gently lifting them from her legs."

O "I-Inco?"

"Her voice is little more than a croak.

I "Olivia…"

I "I can't do anything about your legs... No one can..."

"Her hands squeeze against mine, but she doesn't pull away."

I "I can't imagine the things you've gone through, the things you're still going through, just because of who you are."

I "You're the one who needs help, not me."

“Why am I holding her hands so softly? Why does seeing this expression of hers hurt me?”

“I’ve always thought I’d be the first person to help someone in need, and it’s clear she needs some.”

“But what I’m doing now, what I thought would help and what I’m actually doing don’t make any sense to me at all.”

“It’s instinct alone that’s guiding me and I don’t really know if it’s working at all.”

"I let go of Olivia's claws and straighten up.”

“She's stopped crying now, and her breathing is much more composed."

O "...I'm sorry I called you a bald caveman."

I "Hmm?"

"Oh, yeah, she did say that."

I "It's okay, I'm used to it by now."

O "Still, I shouldn't have said that."

O "A-and it wasn't a speciesist thing, or anything!"

"Olivia starts to blush."

O "I just meant…”

O “...Sometimes, you can be a little thick-headed..."

O "I thought everyone was like that, really."

I "Hey, sometimes we are."

I "We're not all as talented as you are."

"This time, Olivia's laugh is genuine."

O "Maybe…. Maybe your talent is just something else, ya'know?"

O "You just have to be true to yourself and find it."

== >accept her apology

I “Yeah. You’re right, Olivia.”

I “And thank you for telling me all this.”

"Olivia uses the cowl of her hoodie to wipe her eyes."

"I'm actually a little surprised to see smudges of mascara come off."

"Didn't think she would wear make-up…"

"As I watch Olivia try to recompose herself, I can’t help but be happy that she’d let her walls down so much for me to see.”

I “So, for what it’s worth, I forgive you Olivia.”

“Olivia nods, eyes still somewhat teary from her little episode.”

O “No, thank you Inco.”

“I feel my face warm up at that.”

I “So uh… now what?”

O “I don’t know.”

“The air feels muddy between us, and I can’t really say why.”

“A look on the clock on the wall in distraction tells me that lunch is gonna be ending shortly.”

I “Class is gonna start soon.”

O “...”

O “I don’t wanna go to history.”

“A smile crosses my face as a wicked idea comes to mind.”

I “Welp, too bad.”

O “What?”

“I walk around behind Olivia, grinning like a mad idiot.”

O “Inco, what’re you doing? Inco? Inco!”

“Her head tries to follow me as I stand right behind her chair.”

I “I figured that pushing your chair around is real tiring, so how bout I help you out?”

“Olivia blushes and looks away.”

O “...Fine, but just for today.”

>>Convergence point

== >call her out (+1 Olivia)

"Olivia uses the cowl of her hoodie to wipe her eyes."

"I'm actually a little surprised to see smudges of mascara come off."

"Didn't think she would wear make-up…"

"As I watch Olivia try to recompose herself, I can't help but think back to the art contest."

"About how so many people more deserving than me lost their chance because of what Olivia did."

I "Olivia…"

"Olivia looks up at me."

I "Was it worth it?"

O "Wha…?"

"A part of her looks… hurt."

I "What you did, swapping my piece for your own: Was it worth it?"

I "Deceiving everyone in the school…"

I "Deceiving Liz, and Damien."

"I can see Olivia shrink down lower in her chair at the mention of our friends."

"I'm careful to keep my tone neutral for this next part."

I "Was potentially losing your friends worth all this?"

"Olivia doesn't respond at first."

"She fidgets with her pocket for a second, and I can tell whatever she wants to say is eating at her."

"Finally, she gives me an answer, so quietly I can barely hear it."

O "...No."

O "It wasn't worth it."

O "I thought I didn't care about other people, because people didn't care about me."

"She gives me a sad smile."

O "God, I’m such a stupid bitch."

I “I wouldn’t say that, just…”

I “Unaware. Or dense… Like me.”

"I stand up next to her, glancing towards the still-open classroom door."

"There's still a bit of sun streaming through the hallway windows, bathing the entrance in a warm glow."

"Turning to Olivia, I nod towards the door."

I "I think you owe someone else an apology then, too."

"Olivia's eyes meet mine."

"I'm so used to seeing them filled with contempt or boredom, but instead, they're filled with something else."

"Something raw and vulnerable."

O "Do you think they'll understand?"

I "I…"

"I shrug."

I "I don't know."

I "But I know that I'll have your back, no matter what."

>>>Convergence point here

"I extend my hand to her wheelchair handles, careful not to take hold of them at first."

"Olivia hesitates, neck craned, eyes locked on my hand."

"..."

"..."

"She nods."

"With her permission, I move to start pushing her chair."

"The supple covering feels new…"

"Like Olivia's never allowed anyone to use them before."

"I'm careful to move at a steady pace as I wheel her out the door."

"It feels strangely… intimate, pushing her around like this."

"Like at this moment, we're more than just friends."

"A feeling helped in no insignificant way by how the tip of her tail automatically rests around my wrist."

"I feel Olivia's pulse on my wrist, where the serpentine green limb is attached to me."

"And it's even quickening like mine."

"I freeze up for a moment, feeling a fresh torrent of sweat begin to pour off my forehead."

"Olivia stiffens, no doubt finally realizing what she's done, before burying her face in her hands."

"Her tail hits the floor with an audible thump."

"Neither of us say anything for quite some time."

I "H-haha, that was, uh…"

"Incojuststoptalkingjuststoptalking-"

O "T-that's, uh, just what I used to do with my d-dad…haha…"

I "O-oh, yeah, t-totally…"

"..."

"Olivia's hands continue to shield her face."

"There's nothing I can do but start pushing."

"Olivia's tail drags along the ground like a lifeless snake as I wheel her out of the classroom."

I “Ah, I uh…”

“Shutupshutupyoucanpracticallytasteyourheelyouidiot.”

I “I don’t mind, if it’ll make you comfortable.”

“Ugh, Inco, you thoughtless useless human dum-!”

“It’s a subtle feeling this time.”

“Instead of wrapping close around my wrist, it lays atop the back of my hand.”

“Olivia’s finally pulled her hands from her face, but she refuses to look my way.”

“Based on the shade of her cheek and necks, I’d think that she was blushing even worse than me.”

O “Only time you’ll get to do this, Inco. Only time!”

“I nod.”

“And realize that she’s not even looking my way.”

“You buffoon.”

I “Sure.”

“And with the sound of the bell signaling our next class, I guide the annoyed amphibian to Mr. Triggum’s classroom.”

“...”[cs]

#School Hallway

“The rest of the day seemed to sail by after that experience with Olivia and Mr. Iadakan.”

“Honestly everything I’d heard has been swirling wildly in my head, trying to really piece together the events perfectly.”

“With everything that had happened leading up to the contest too, a part of me is still in shock.”

“All the conversations about my entry, all the praise for it and all the friends I’d made off of it…”

“If I’d bothered to actually check it, I’d have realized it all sooner.”

“Why didn’t I even check?”

“Was it a subconscious thing?”

“I mean, I know I couldn’t even vote because I’d put a submission in, but I could’ve at least seen the other submissions too.”

“Maybe I could ask someone who knows more.”

“Except who the heck would I ask? And what would I even say?”

“‘Hey, so, I thought my submission was going to win based off of everyone else saying so, but it turns out it wasn’t even my submission and it was swapped out secretly by someone else.’”

"'But I don't wanna say who that someone else is because they had a reason to do it and I don't want to hurt them or get them in trouble because they're not in the best place emotionally.'"

"..."

"A shake of my head to clear my thoughts and I find myself face first with the exit door of the school."

"Great. And now you're going to strain your neck."

"I feel the weight of the world drop on me as my morose mood worsens."

#scene school outside

"As I make it ouside, I can't help but think about Liz."

"How would she take the news?"

"I can practically see her staring at me, disappointed in both Olivia and I for stealing her opportunity."

L "Inco…"

I "Huh?"

"Forget the whole 'practical' part, she's actually staring at me!"

"I follow Liz's neck with my gaze, spotting Damien standing alongside her body on the sidewalk."

"He gives me a toothy grin, accompanied by a wave."

L "Are you two okay?"

I “Uh.. yes?”

L “Where were you during lunch?”

“Before I can think up an excuse, Olivia interjects with a strained voice.”

>>if Olivia was called out:

O “We were talking about the art contest.”

L “Oh? What about it?”

“Olivia’s mouth twists into a frown. It looks like she’s thinking something through.”

O “I’m really sorry, Liz.”

L “Huh?”

“Liz looks taken aback, but Olivia doesn’t let her respond.”

O “In the art contest, I..”

“Her head turns up to me, as if asking permission.”

“I do my best to smile, hoping she’ll find it encouraging.”

“It seems to help relax her, and she looks at Liz once again.”

O “I swapped Inco’s submission with my own.”

“Liz’s head and body recoil from Olivia’s words, and her initial bewilderment is quickly replaced by righteous indignation.”

L “Why would you do something like that!?”

“Olivia lowers her head.”

O “I... wanted to know if people would actually like it because it's good, not because of…"

"She falls silent for a second."

O "Not because it was me doing it."

O “But I didn’t think about how it would hurt you, or Inco, or anybody else.”

O “I know you wanted a chance to place in the contest, and... I might’ve taken that from you.”

“She finally raises her head to meet Liz’s stare.”

O “I’m sorry, Liz...”

“Silence fills the air after Olivia finishes speaking.”

“Liz’s expression is flat.”

“She’s probably trying to decide how she feels about all this.”

D “Awh, c’mon, Olivia! I’m sure Liz ain’t gonna rip you up over something like that.”

D “Right?”

“Liz grimaces at Damien’s response, but she doesn’t respond to his words.”

L “I don’t think it actually matters, Olivia.”

L “I mean, if you submitted it under your name, we’d be in the exact same situation.”

L “You would just be in Inco’s spot.”

L “And- because of that, I don’t understand why you would do it in the first place.”

L “It doesn’t change anything, does it?”

“Olivia sighs, deflating in her chair.”

"When she speaks again, her voice is quiet."

O “I… I needed to know people liked my art."

L “What?”

O "I couldn't stand the thought of people pitying me anymore."

"Olivia starts fidgeting with her armrest."

O "My whole life, I've been reduced to {i}this{/i}."

"She gestures at her legs."

O "I've always been different, always will {i}be{/i} different. It's not a phase I can grow out of, or a persona I can choose to leave behind."

"Wait, is she talking about…"

O "It's…me. No matter what I do, it's me."

O "And I just needed to know…"

"Olivia finally raises her head to meet Liz's gaze, her yellow eyes shimmering."

O "Is this all people see when they look at me?"

"The three of us shift awkwardly for a moment."

"Well, Liz and I do, anyway. I think I can see Damien mouthing Olivia's words, like he's trying to figure them out."

"Liz finally breaks the silence."

L "Look, Olivia, you're not exactly… the most popular person, you know?"

"Olivia flinches in her chair."

L "But that has nothing to do with your skills!"

L “If people are voting for your art, it’s because your art is [i]good[/i].”

“Olivia seems surprised by Liz’s sentiment, and I can see she’s thinking about it.”

D “Oh, is that what this is about?”

"Ah, Damien has finally decided to join us in the present."

D “Don’t worry about it, ‘Liv! Your paintings are pretty killer.”

“Damien states this as if it was a fact, which only serves to fluster Olivia further.”

“Eventually, though, she recovers. It takes a few seconds, but eventually her frown turns into a smile.”

O “T-Thanks, guys.”

O “I really appreciate it.”

“Liz returns the smile, and it looks like they’ve made up.”

“I can’t help but smile as well, seeing Olivia happy like this.”

D “Alright, hug it out!”

L “W-Wait, what!?”

D “C’mon, that’s the best way to fix things between friends!”

“Damien places a hand on Liz’s shoulder, tugging her towards Olivia as she swats at him in protest.”

“Olivia rolls backwards, and her verbal protests fall on deaf ears as Damien continues to try and force the pair together.”

“I can’t help but laugh at the comical situation, and soon enough, the others join me.”

Convergence point

>>if Olivia was NOT called out:

O “W-We were just, uh.. working on a project?”

O “We have a group project in Mr. Iadakan’s class, and we had to finish it.”

“Liz stares at Olivia for a few seconds, trying to get a read on her.”

“Her head raises to stare at me.”

"I can still remember the feeling of Olivia's tail around my wrist."

"I don't like lying to Liz, but…"

I “Yep, just some last-minute things we forgot about.”

“Liz glances back and forth at us for a few moments before retracting her head, satisfied with the explanation.”[ct]

L "Well, just text us next time."

L "The way you took off like that, Olivia, we thought something was wrong."

"Liz mollifies her words with a smile."

D “Yeah! And if you needed to finish something, we could've helped!”

"The thought of Damien helping me with an actual graded project sends shivers down my spine."

I “N-no, that's alright! We managed just fine.”

I “Plus I don’t wanna bog Liz down with more work.”

“I get an appreciative smile from Liz for that.”

L “Thank you.”

L “If only SOMEONE was as cooperative as you, Inco.”

“Damien isn’t even looking her way.”

Convergence Point

>>Convergence Point

“Our group continued to meander around the front of the school slowly, until we came to the corner where we split ways.”

“Damien in his usual excited ways waved me goodbye, while the three of them continued on toward the nearby suburbs.”

“...”

“The following day, Mr. Iadakan informed me that my entry wouldn’t have made it past the preliminary rounds.”

Iad “[i]I’m sorry, there’s a bit of a painting bias among the student body.[/i]”

“That knowledge stung, but I could understand it.”

“Especially after seeing all the other finalist entries.”

“Still, people were wondering about it, word got around.”

“The only thing faster than light was rumors.”

“Lying to everyone, again, made me feel like an absolute heel.”

“But saying that I couldn’t enter old portfolio pieces at least alayed further questions.”

“And people still thought I was an expert painter.”

“...”

“Damn it…”

"..."

--End Chapter--

_____

Chapter 5.5

Due to a rainfall, Inco stays after school in the hopes to not get soaked to the bone and sick. As he stands at the entrance of the school watching the rain Mr. Iadakan and Olivia pass him by. Mr. Iadakan asks about his current situation, and asks if he'd like to pass the time helping him with something. Inco agrees more out of boredom and the trio move to his classroom. There, Olivia busies herself with course work, remedial lessons that've been forced on her by Scaler due to her poor grades, and Mr. Iadakan volunteered to supervise her as she works on them. Mr. Iadakan and Inco make idle chat as they start sorting out books for the library and future lessons, with Mr. Iadakan casually giving life advice to him along with some photography tips. All the while Olivia keeps peering at Iadakan, though whenever Inco looks she turns away and refocuses on her lessons.

When the rain starts to let up Mr. Iadakan lets Olivia go, even offering her an umbrella, which she takes. As for Inco, he offers to call him a cab. Inco thanks him for the advice and the offer to pay for a cab, but he tells him he'll be fine getting home by taking the train. Inco asks Olivia if she'd like to walk together, since holding the umbrella and pushing her chair would be difficult and he could at least help, but she shoots it down. When Inco looks to Iadakan, he sides with Olivia, telling Inco to let it go. She doesn't bother to even acknowledge Inco afterwards, and just continues on in the direction opposite Inco's station.

#fade into hallway
Heavy Rain (heh) SFX
Somber OST plays

"With the changing of the weather

"The end of the day rolls around, and as luck would have it, it's pouring cats and dogs."

"When I moved to Volcaldera Bluffs, I expected it to be a tropical wonderland like in all the commercials."

"[i]'Come visit and enjoy the fine beaches and vibrant

nightlife!’[/i]”

“No one ever said anything about how humid and rainy it could get.”

“Well, until the weather lets up a bit, I’m not going back outside.”

“Can’t say I’m a fan of staying after school, especially since I have no reason to.”

“I’ve got no clubs to attend, and no homework to finish up.”

“Damn my good study habits.”

“As I listen to the heavy downpour outside I contemplate methods of maintaining dryness.”

“Can’t use my jacket or backpack, neither are particularly waterproof.”

“I think I heard on TV once that running through rain just gets you more wet.”

“Man, I am bad at this.”

“If this rain doesn’t let up in the next half hour, I might just have to try and run for it anyway.”

“Damn it, why didn’t I pack an umbrella?”

#Fade out of BGM
#Fade into BGM to hallway just in front of the main school entrance
Heavy Rain SFX gets even LOUDER
Continue playing somber OST

“Should’ve taken my chance earlier and ran.”

“If anything, it sounds like it’s more intense than before.”

“So much for caution.”

“I guess I’m really stuck here. Might as well find somewhere to wait this out."

“My search for a suitable spot is immediately interrupted by distant conversation echoing through the hallway."

Prockling "-and next period, the first thing he does is ditch class and try again with the same student."

"Ms. Prockling and Mr. Iadakan stroll towards me, gossiping about something."

Iad "Well, at least his heart is in the right place."

Prockling "You're joking? He jumped into the swimming pool with his clothes on!"

"A brief laughter is shared between the two, though it cuts off as Iadakan finally spots me."

Iad "Ah, Inco! I assumed you would have headed home by now."

I "I was going to, but-"

#sfk thunder

I "...The storm kinda interrupted my plans."

Iad "Not wanting to get soaked, I see."

"I nod sheepishly, and I can’t help but feel a bit stupid at not being better prepared."

"Ms. Prockling narrows her eyes at me."

Prockling “And you haven’t called your parents to come pick you up?”

I “They’re still at work, ma’am.”

“And I doubt they’d come even if they weren’t.”

Prockling "Mr. Nito, it's not often we let students stay after school without an excuse."

I “But I-”

“She stops me with an upright hand.”

Prockling "And getting a little wet is [i]not[/i] a valid excuse."

Prockling "Please figure something out, or I may have to report this to Principal Scaler."

Iad "Relax, Francine."

"The pale ptero lays a hand on her shoulder."

Iad "No need to get her involved. We don't want another incident like what happened back in March.”

“Mr. Iadakan’s vague words seem to make her hesitate.”

Iad "Look, I've actually got some projects I need done, and I think Mr. Nito here is just the one who can help."

Iad "If he's with me, he won't be trespassing. I'll send him on his way when we finish."

Iad “Besides, I got Olivia in tutoring now, too.”

Prockling “What- then why are you here? You can’t be leaving students alone in your class! Especially not one that’s [i] disabled[i/]!”

Iad “Oooh, you know what, you’re absolutely right. I’ll take your advice right now, good call.”

Iad “Guess that means I can’t help you with that filing this week, sorry!”

"Ms. Prockling gives me another look before throwing her hands up."

Prockling "Alright, alright!"

"As she walks away, I can hear her mumbling to herself."

Prockling "Why am I the only one that sticks to the contract…"

"Iadakan waits for her to turn the corner before rounding on me."

Iad “Come on, Inco.”

“I can’t help but be surprised, I really thought I was in trouble for a second there.”

I "Mr. Iadakan, thank you for, uh, covering for me."

I "I think I'll just risk the rain and-"

"His taloned hand snatches my shoulder as I try to excuse myself."

Iad "Oh no, Inco, I wasn't kidding."

Iad "There are some things that I need done, and I can think of no one else better suited than you to help me."

"I gulp, resisting the urge to glance at the clock."

"How long am I going to be kept here?"

I "...S-Sure, I'd love to help."

"Iadakan nods, clapping me on the back and guiding me down the hall."

Iad "Excellent, glad to hear it!"

#fade to black

“It doesn’t take long for us to get to the art studio.”

#fade back to Iadakan's classroom

>Olivia’s in the classroom doing extra course work
>grumbling and complaining about it
>Iadakan explains to her that if she’d focus on her actual classes this wouldn’t be necessary
>regardless invites both Olivia and Inco into the dark room
>Inco is excited about the possibility of helping Iadakan with developing some photos
>Excitement ends when Iadakan flicks on normal lights and points at the heavy looking boxes set in the huge table sink in the middle
>Iadakan opens one and explains that he’d splurged a little on new print enlargers for the room
>Iadakan and Inco start setting one up while Olivia continues her course work at one of the stations
>Keeps looking over longingly until Iadakan excuses himself (Joke about his old-man back or something)
>Now it’s just Inco and Olivia helping him put together the enlargers
>tiny bit of photography autism from Inco, mainly why Inco pursues it and even dabbling into Olivia’s own feelings on art
>Power suddenly cuts out, Inco and Olivia suddenly can’t see anything
>Inco trying desperately to find the light switch (something

funny here, could end up stepping on Olivia's tail or grabbing her mouth or something)
>Finds the switch, doesn't work because no power
>loud scream of terror when door is flung open and both are blinded by a flashlight
>Iadakan is back, breathing heavily from running
>Went to check lost and found boxes for umbrellas but the power went out
>Back in the classroom now, Inco is helping Olivia with her work
>Iadakan is making various calls in the corner
>Trying to find someone to give them a ride home in the storm
>eventually just natural dialogue between the 3, maybe Iadakan

"Stepping into the class I notice the irate glare from a particularly grumpy gator girl."

O "Mr. Ia- You're not Mr. Iadakan."

I "Hey, Olivia. You're still here?"

"No, clearly that's her evil twin sister I never knew about, Bolivia."

Iad "Is something wrong, Ms. Halford?"

"She sulks but turns her head back down at a pile of papers on her desk."

O "No."

O "-stupidfreakinremediation."

Iad "What was that?"

O "Nothing."

"The photography teacher shakes his head, then leans close to whisper in my ear."

Iad "Olivia's been given extra assignments, to help improve her

grades.”

“Oh.”

Iad “Personally, I think it’s unnecessary, but with the districts’ eyes on the school, well…”

“He moves away, toward the door at the back of the classroom.”

Iad “Okay you two, come along.”

O “What?”

Iad “Don’t worry, I just need to give Inco his own assignment.”

Iad “I got just the thing to pass the time. C’mon.”

“He starts walking to the back of the room and waves for the two of us to follow him.”

“Whoa, something in the Darkroom?”

“Oh man, I thought we wouldn’t get to do anything in there until the last few weeks of the semester!”

“Are we going to be getting a head-start on this section? Maybe we’ll be making prints, or learning about C-41 and-”

“Huh?”

“Oh. Olivia’s poking my back.”

O “Quit it with the cinematic gait, you’re going too slow.”

“Oops.”

“I shake the excitement off and head into the Darkroom, Iadakan holds the door open for the two of us to enter.”

“The inside glows a vibrant crimson light.”

“Iadakan’s suit appears to light up in the red lights, as does my shirt.”

“I’ve only actually been in a darkroom once before, this is so cool!”

“I clasp my hands together.”

I “So, what are we developing?”

Iad “We? This is an important job just for you.”

I “Alright, I’m ready for it! What am I developing?”

Iad “Your lower back!”

#beat

“There’s a click of a switch, and the red lights switch to normal lights and properly illuminate the room.”

Iad “There’s boxes over there, I need one at each station around the room but they’re too heavy for me.”

O “Pheheheh.”

Iad “If you can, of course. Legally I can’t make you do any of this.”

I “Do… Do I at least get extra credit?”

Iad “You get one of the bags of chips I keep hidden in my desk.”

I “Fine.”

Iad “Nice!”

Iad “Come on Olivia, we should clear the way for him.”

Iad “There actually is something in the box we’ll need in a bit.”

“The two move back to the entrance, and I’m faced with the myriad boxes I’ll have to carry.”

“Looks like there’s about ten. They’re pretty medium-sized, like you could fit a table lamp in them.”

“How heavy can they- AUGH!”

“[i]thud[/i]!”

#section above can be replaced with choreography

Iad “Lift with your knees, Inco!”

“This is gonna suck…”

“I look to Olivia, and she already has her phone out and pointed my way.”

“...Damn it.”

“I shift my legs and try again.”

I “HRRRRRRGG…!”

“I actually managed to get this thing off the ground!”

“This must weigh at least seventy pounds.”

I “WHAT ARE THESE LOADED WITH?! BRICKS?!”

Iad “Something like that! Careful, they’re fragile!”

“...”

“Finally, I get the last box in its’ place.”

“I pick a chair and collapse in a heap.”

“My muscles are on fire…”

“Though to be honest, I don’t know if I could’ve done all that at the beginning of the year.”

“I guess I’m getting stronger.”

“Iadakan walks back into the Darkroom with a small black toolbox.”

Iad “Oh, good, you’re done!”

Iad “Come on out and take a breather, that looked tough!”

#textbox shaking to simulate labored breathing
I “I’d rather… Stay… Here…”

“Olivia shows up in the doorway behind Iadakan.”

O “I’m surprised you didn’t use it.”

“Use what?”

??? “Oh, Mr. Iadakan, I’m done with your cart, thanks for letting us use it again.”

Iad “No worries, I know how strapped the theater department equipment budget is.”[cu]

Iad “Before you get started with me Inco, you didn’t ask.”

I “For the love of- I hate you.”

Iad “That’s the spirit!”

“Olivia stifles her laughter into a snickering snortfest.”

Iad “Your mood will improve when you see just what you’ve been carrying.”

“Oh?”

“He grabs a box cutter from a shelf and slices the top of one open.”

Iad “They’re brand new print-enlargers.”

“The green girl guffaws.”

I “P-p-p-pardon?!”

“Our teacher rolls his eyes and pulls out what looks like a large overhead lamp from the box.”

Iad “PRINT enlarger. Next week we’ll be going over how to properly use the negatives you all developed this week.”

I “Oh. Oh sweet!”

I “So that means-”

Iad “That you’ll be making your own prints for midterms.”

“That sounds AWESOME!”

“Oh man, I can’t wait to-”

Iad “But before any of that, these need to be assembled.”

“The rest of the parts are taken from the first box and set down meticulously.”

“Olivia’s gotten curious, as she’s rolled up to the station and handling one of the funnier looking pieces.”

Iad “Anywho, here you two go.”

O “Wait two?”

Iad “Yes, two. Don’t think I didn’t notice you watching Inco so much.”

“The stammered denial from Olivia does nothing to wipe the cheeky grin from our teacher’s face.”

I “But what about you, Mr. Iadakan?”

Iad “I’ll be right back.”

“He makes his way to the door again.”

Iad “Get started without me, I need to go fetch some things.”

“Before either Olivia or I can speak up he’s left the room.”

“Olivia already has the tool box open on her lap.”

I “Right then.”

“I grab the folded up instructions and lay it out, seeing the details of the bizarre device fully assembled.”

“Okay so-”

“*THUNK*”

#inco jumps

O “Step one.”

O “Uh, hand me the next piece.”

O “Oh, did I scare you?”

I “Yes, you scared me!”

I “These things are heavy, what if you dropped that on something!”

O “... I didn’t though.”

I “But you could’ve!”

O “And I didn’t.”

“Olivia’s tail reaches for some brackets, but I grab the limb before she can take them.”

I “Hold on, we gotta do things right or the enlarger might not work right.”

“She retracts her tail from the table.”

O “You’re no fun, It’s just an oversized lamp.”

I “That’s a gross oversimplification.”

O “You're a gross oversimplification.”

I “Iadakan’s gonna make you use the one you break.”

O “Just means I can sketch more, right?”

I “Well, it’d mean you can’t participate and learn about photography.”

O “Who cares?” [slightly ooc, tweak]

I “I do.”

I “Whole reason I took this class, after all. This one and my actual dedicated photography period.”

O “Oh. Sorry.”

I “It’s nothing.”

“Olivia politely rests her hands in her lap.”

“Her eyes linger on the box of parts.”

O “Well…”

I “?”

O “How does… Uh, how does it work, then?”

I “The print-enlarger?”

“She shakes her head.”

O “Photography.”

O “I only sketch and paint.”

“Huh.”

“I think that’s the first time someone’s actually asked me about it.”

“Sure, I’ve had lots of mid-shower rehearsals explaining my hobbies and their cultural significance to others, but none of that’s coming to me right now.”

I “It’s all about shot composition.”

I “Getting the right things in the right places at the right time to evoke a certain feeling.”

O “Composition is a thing in painting too, you know.”

I “Yeah, but it’s a lot easier to pick the composition you want. You don’t have to worry about any factors other than yourself.”

I “With photography, you have to build the set to get a good photo. That’s the fun of it.”

O “But why would you want to limit yourself like that? Why not just draw whatever you’re taking a picture of instead?“

O “You could express all kinds of things you could never express with a picture.”

I “I guess for me it’s about memories.”

I “Whenever you experience something beautiful, or something that makes you happy, you get to capture that moment in time and look back on it later.”
I “I recall a saying, can’t remember where I read it, but it’d read like.”

I/??? “People want a legacy. Some way for them to be remembered.”

I/??? “Something that’ll outlive them once they’ve passed on.”

I/??? “And that leg

I “It’s like… a connection to the past that helps you hold on to something.”

I “Every photograph is a real moment in time, and they’re not affected by forgetfulness or misremembering.”

I “It’s like… proof that it all actually happened, you know?”

>>inco likes photography because in his sterile life where he has no ups or downs because of his upbringing (no want for anything, absent parents that are neither positive nor negative) and is able to make any feeling last longer by making them tangible through pictures
>>olivia likes painting because it gives a larger degree of control where you’re held back only by your own ability, and if you don’t like something you can just change or retry it. Anything intentionally negative in a picture is because it’s explicitly meant to be there

“She smirks at my petulant comment.”

“Fine, I’ll show her.”

“Olivia’s finished screwing down the support.”

“I hold the lighting portion up, making sure it’s at the right angle, and fasten the last portion of the enlarger in.”

I “I’ll prove to you that this takes skill!”

“I plug the machine in and flip the switch, happy that it works right and lights up the entire base.”

“Olivia looks at me with confusion as I go back to the entrance of the room and flick the lightswitch, bathing the room in bright red again.”

“Going back to our work space, I pull the developed negatives from my backpack and slot the slide I want into the carrier.”

I “Aaaand, tadah!”

“The negative carrier in place in the machine, a blurry grey blob is projected onto the base.”

O “Uh… what?”

I “Give me a minute.”

“I hold the manual under the light to the side of the blob, checking which knob is which, and slowly turn them.”

“As the lens and billows shift, the rorschach test transforms, gaining more definition until finally it becomes the spitting image of the school’s front entrance.”

I “I can even do this.”

“I take out the negative and place another atop it before slotting the carrier back in, while also increasing the strength of the light”

“The image displayed is now the entrance with a half-dozen semi-transparent students in front of it.”

O “What did you do?”

I “I overlapped another shot. The backgrounds are the same and doubled up, so I had to intensify the light otherwise the entrance would be too bright.”

“She hums, but I think she’s feigning her apathy this time.”

I “It’s a lot more technical I guess, but I only knew how to do this kinda stuff from Mr. Iadakan’s lectures about negatives.”

O “What else can you do with this thing?”

I “Hmm… I dunno but-”

“What’s that sme- Oh shit!”

“I pull out the negative carrier and wince at how hot it is.”

I “crapcrapcrapcrap.”

“Olivia is quick to rip the plug from the socket.”

“With my sleeve I open up the carrier and see I’ve managed to melt the two negatives together.”

I “Ah man, I was going to use that.”

“The green gator girl lays a sympathetic hand on my shoulder to my surprise.”

O “Hey, shit happens.”

O “I’ve ruined a lot of paintings in the past too, you know.”

“She takes the reels from the warm metal plate and holds them up to the red light, trying to see through them.”

O “And you’ve got more shots on this thing.”

I “But I liked those shots.”

O “Then go retake them.”

I “It’s not that easy. Like, it has to be the exact same time and weather and-”

#Lightning sfx, black out screen.”

I “-lighting?”

“The blackness is all-encompassing, I can’t even see Olivia who I know is right next to me.”

O “I-inco?”

I “Hm?”

“There’s a shakiness in her tone.”

I “I’m still here.”

O “I know that!”

O “But uh…”

I “Yeah, guess the school lost power.”

“I feel something cover my hand.”

“And then squeeze.”

“Painfully.”

I “Owowowowoww.”

O “Sorry!”

“The pressure lessens, but she doesn’t let go of my fingers.”

I “No it’s fine.”

“There’s a subtle shake in the scaly limb in my hand, but when I brush my thumb across it the limb eases.”

O “H-hey. Stop that.”

I “Stop what?”

O “J-just, that, stop that thing you’re doing with your hand.”

“I shrug.”

“And then want to slap my face when I realize she can’t see that.”

I “Alright.”

“Standing here in the darkness of the Dark Room isn’t getting us anywhere.”

O “We should go find-”

#sfx door slam, Inco and Olivia scared sprite in a circle spotlight centerscreen

“*WHAM*”

??? “Olivia! Inco!”

O&I “AAAAAAAAA-”

“My instincts kick in.”

“I hop back. To make space between us and the killer.”

“I turn my back to them. To become a defensive wall.”

“I wrap my arms around Olivia’s head. To make sure she’s 100% protected.”

Iad “Hey hey hey, it’s me, Mr. Iadakan.”

Iad “It took a bit to find a torch but with how this room is…”

“I look up to the shining white pterodactyl pointing the flashlight at his own face.”

I “Oh…”

O “Gitoffmeyougit!”

I “Right right!”

“Before I can, I’m pushed off by Olivia’s brawny arms.”

I “Oof!”

O “I’m just thinking, these things seem kinda pointless.”

O “People have switched to digital cameras like, a decade ago now.”

I “Well, yeah, sure.”

“I take up the next pieces, slowly putting them together as the support column.”

I “Some people still paint on canvas, even though there’s all sorts of programs you can use.”

“While I work on the column, Olivia has started fastening together the lighting portion of the machine.”

"Mr. Iadakan ushers me quickly down the familiar path to his classroom."

"Surprisingly, there's already someone there."

I "Olivia!"

"The green gator jumps as we come in, quickly tearing out her earbuds."

"There's sketchpads and charcoal all over the table. Before I can get a good look, Olivia tucks them under her bag."

"Things between us have been better, ever since we hashed it out after the contest."

"But I still feel like she's avoiding me, sometimes."

O "God, you guys scared the shit outta me."

O "And what are you still doing here?"

"Her question is no doubt directed at me, but Mr. Iadakan pipes up first."

Iad "Inco here was just about to help me with something."

Iad "Actually, [i]both[/i] of you are."

"Olivia groans."

O "...Do I have a choice?"

Iad "C'mon, you might enjoy it! Life is too short to spend it without trying new things."

"Mr. Iadakan gives her a wink."

"With one final sigh, Olivia wheels herself away from the bench."

"Fiddling with a set of keys, Mr. Iadakan unlocks a door at the end of his studio."

"It's pitch blank in there, what is this place?"

Iad "Just a second… There we go!"

"Mr. Iadakan flicks a switch on the wall with one wing, and at once the room is filled with fluorescent light."

"The space is cramped, forcing the three of us to stand nearly on top of one another."

"The claustrophobic feeling is only enhanced by the total lack of windows."

"Shallow metal bathtubs line a bench against the wall, and there's some sort of drying rack set up against another."

"It all looks strangely familiar…"

I "Wait a minute, is this the-"

Iad "Dark room! Well done, Inco. You'll actually be using it in a few weeks, so consider this a sneak peek."

Iad "Come, both of you."

"He directs us to a tarp-covered shape in the corner."

Iad "Got a new set of Print Enlargers. Need to install them before the lesson starts."

O "And we're going to do what, exactly?"

Iad "Well, you're going to help, obviously!"

"I do a double-take at the new equipment and Olivia."

"Each box looks pretty heavy, and there's not a lot of room to maneuver in here."

"As if reading my thoughts, Mr. Iadakan starts barking orders."

Iad "Alright Inco, if you just get it from that side… No, watch me, grip it here, there you go."

Iad "Olivia, guide us in, alright?"

"He gestures to an empty bench, where a corresponding apparatus sits already installed."

Iad "On three, okay? One…two…three!"

"Holy shit, this thing weighs a ton!"

"I can feel my arms start shaking hard. I don't know how much longer I can hold on."

"Looking over, Mr. Iadakan doesn't even seem to notice the weight."

"Gritting my teeth, I wait for Olivia's instructions."

"Wait, is she smirking?!"

O "Alright, I guess just a little to the left, and…"

"Carefully, we manage to set the… whatever it is in correctly."

Iad "Perfect!"

O "Yeah Inco, nice work."

"The grinning gator waggles her eyebrows at me."

O "I almost thought Iadakan was going to drop it there, for a second."

"Did it just get hotter in here?"

"Wait, no, that's my face."

"If that's the way she wants to play…"

I "At least we had you here, Olivia. For a second, I was like, 'Oh no, if we're doing all the work, who's going to sit down and do nothing?!'"

"Olivia's scales take on a distinctly scarlet hue."

"I'll consider that my payback."

"Before Olivia and I can continue to trade barbs, Mr. Iadakan steps in, producing a rolled set of instructions from his jacket."

Iad "Alright, alright, the easy part is over."

Iad "Now you two have to install it."

"Grinning, he hands what feels like a small book over to me."

I & O "What?!"

"Olivia and I share a look of stupefied horror."

Iad "I'll be back in a few minutes to check on how it's going."

Iad "Good luck!"

"Before we can protest, he's gone."

"..."

"I glance down at Olivia just as she glances up at me."

O "..."

I "I guess we… get started?"

O "Guess so."

"As she wheels herself up to the bench, a slight smile creeps on Olivia's face."

O "Did you see how quickly he left us? Felt like there should've been a dust outline of him for a second."

I "Yeah, guess we both fell right into his trap."

O "Guess so. Normally I'm better at spotting bait than that."

O "So, where do we start?"

I "Wait, why am I in charge?"

O "What, aren't you humans supposed to be good at this?"

O "'Conquer the world with tools,' all of that stuff?"

"I just roll my eyes as Olivia's smile becomes a shit-eating grin."

O "Oh come on, I was just kidding."

O "I figure you're just, you know, better at this kind of stuff."

I "What kind of stuff?"

O "You know…"

"Olivia waves her claws towards the instruction booklet."

O "Reading and junk."

I "So what, you're saying you can't read?"

"Olivia playfully punches my thigh."

O "No, stupid."

O "You always seem to know what's what in class."

O "Well, except for Iadakan's class. You're pretty hopeless there."

O "So, I just thought you should lead."

I "Oh."

"Olivia's half-complement leaves me a little speechless."

I "Thanks, I guess?"

I "I don't know how well I'm going to do at this, though…"

"I idly pick through the instructions at random."

"Oh Raptor Jesus, it's not even all in English."

I "This is worse than Ikrunka [cv]furniture."

"That raises a snort from Olivia."

O "Just start at the beginning, doofus."

"I flip back to the start."

I "I think we should start by unpacking all these little bits, here."

"I gesture to several bags of parts that Mr. Iadakan left out."

"Olivia begins by slitting open each one and dumping everything in a big pile."

"Oh dear."

"It takes us a while, but we eventually start finding a groove."

"I would check in the book, trying to follow along as best I could from the pictures and poorly translated Grugle instructions…"

"...And Olivia would sit there and pass me each piece as I needed them."

"We actually made a decent team, all things considered."

"I thought Olivia would just want to slack off, but she actually seemed motivated to get it done correctly."

"Something kept weighing on me, however."

not sure how this conversation should go, or what they should talk about so I'll leave this for now. Feel like we could make it more heart-to-heart, or just have Inco glad they're friends again.

#after they finish, Iadakan would give advice to Inco about ???

Iad "Oh, will you look at that."

"Mr. Iadakan gestures to the window."

Iad "Seems our little squall has stopped."

"Oh yeah, he's right."

"Truth be told, I didn't even realize, I was so caught up in getting that projector installed."

"...And in talking with Olivia."

Iad "Well, no need to keep you here any longer, hmm?"

I "Wha?"

Iad "You're free to go, Inco."

I "Oh. Right, sorry."

"Shit, is it that late already?"

Iad "I do hope your parents won't be too worried, Inco. I have to admit, I rather forgot to notify them."

Iad "Do you need them to pick you up?"

"I shrug."

"I doubt they even could get away from work."

I "It's fine, I'll just take the train."

Iad "Well, perhaps I could call a cab?"

I "No, it's fine Mr. Iadakan, really."

I "But thanks."

* There, Olivia busies herself with course work, remedial lessons that’ve been forced on her by Scaler due to her poor grades, and Mr. Iadakan volunteered to supervise her as she works on them.

* Mr. Iadakan and Inco make idle chat as they start sorting out books for the library and future lessons, with Mr. Iadakan casually gives life advice to him along with some photography tips.

* All the while Olivia keeps peering at Iadakan, though whenever Inco looks she turns away and refocuses on her lessons.

* When the rain starts to let up Mr. Iadakan lets Olivia go, even offering her an umbrella, which she takes.

* As for Inco, he offers to call him a cab, but Inco thanks him for the advice and the offer to pay for a cab but tells him he’ll be fine getting home by taking the train.

* Inco asks Olivia if she’d like to walk together, since holding the umbrella and pushing her chair would be difficult and he could at least help, but she shoots it down.

* When Inco looks to Iadakan, he sides with Olivia, telling Inco to let it go.

* Olivia doesn’t bother to even acknowledge Inco afterwards, and just continues on in the direction opposite Inco’s station.

_____

Chapter 6
oct 18
After school, inco has been trying to improve his painting skills but is frustrated with his lack of significant progress (hasn't read vilppu like a scrub), damien offers to take the group out to an arcade in the city. In the arcade the group finds that Damien had brought them on the day of the weekly fighting game tourney. The four enter together, inco notices Olivia's unsure about it, but she makes it through the first round, Liz and Damien lose immediately. inco watches olivia play her third round (inco lost the second round to lowtier grug offscreen). inco then sees ltg and olivia play, and he looks to be deliberately playing badly, inco can either cheer olivia on or egg on ltg to actually play competitively against her.

if inco cheers on olivia, she wins but the victory seems hollow
if inco eggs on ltg, he starts trying seriously and wins 2-1, and olivia appreciates the challenge (+1 Olivia)

olivia gets some free arcade tokens as a prize, and the two finish their date playing fighting game cabinets together.

#After playing the game with the foot pedal, Olivia loses her interest in playing much else. Damien finds the two and talks about how Olivia used to be the best player around the arcade a decade ago, and mentions the current ‘champion’ is around. He describes how competitive she would get, a complete 180 from how she acts now. The interaction gets Olivia to smile a bit more, and Inco encourages her to pursue the endeavor to reclaim her former glory. She responds enthusiastically, as though given

permission to go nuts trying to be the best again. She finds ‘Buster’, the current champion, and interrupts his game by placing a quarter on the machine he’s using, challenging him directly.

#Buster takes it seriously and laughs at first, before turning and seeing Olivia, at which point he gets visibly uncomfortable. He convinces the rest of inco’s group to play him first with some BS rule he comes up with that ‘everyone new must play first’. He easily bests Inco, and Inco makes note of how badly he lost, as though Buster was just toying with him. Damien and Liz also lose easily, although by this point a crowd’s been attracted to the scene to watch Buster defend his title.

#Olivia gives her commentary to Inco all the while, commenting on the various playstyles and hyping herself up to play. (VERY IMPORTANT: DO NOT DESCRIBE WHAT THE GAMEPLAY IS, WE’RE WATCHING PEOPLE WATCH PEOPLE PLAY GAMES, NOT WATCHING PEOPLE PLAY GAMES.) Eventually, her turn is finally up once more, and she plays against Buster.

#She loses the first match just barely, and during the second match Inco notices Buster is playing a bit more loosely and realizes he’s intentionally making it seem like he’s worse than he is so he doesn’t just destroy Olivia the same way he’d beat all of them. Inco gets the choice to either call out Buster for sandbagging, or to cheer Olivia on so she wins.

#If Inco calls out Buster for sandbagging, Olivia freezes in place and the crowd actually responds positively on Busters’ side, thinking him virtuous for going easy for Olivia. If he cheers Olivia on, she continues, but notices the sandbagging herself.

#She ‘wins’ the round, and excuses herself to the bathroom. Inco follows, and talks to her. She’s in the middle of a breakdown, thinking that even her fond memories as a kid being the best were just other people being ‘considerate’ for her and letting her ‘win’.

#If Inco had called out the sandbagging, she returns to the match and ‘wins’ the next round, before inarticulately screaming at Buster for letting her win like that. She’s soon reduced to sobbing, and Inco has to roll her out.

#If Inco had cheered Olivia on, she returns to the match and calls out the sandbagging herself. She wins the next round, and then while everyone else is celebrating demands to win best of five, giving Buster another chance at winning without sandbagging and by giving it his all. She wins those round as well, proving her worth to herself and everyone else at the arcade (Avoid phrasing this as more important than it is, the point is less about the worth of being good at vidya, the importance of the scene is that Olivia was able to go above and beyond to reach her goals independently of the extra 'help' she gets.)

Chapter 6
#black screen
"As more time passes and the art contest fades into the background, I've found myself in a conundrum of my own doing."

"My peers' concerns about my entry were resolved."

"But I hadn't accounted for the new questions about my portfolio."

"My PAINT portfolio."

"The few times I showed off my photography work, they'd be mildly impressed at best."

"They were never upfront about it either."

"No, instead I got the run-around."

"[i]'oh, uh yeah, these are nice Inco'[/i]"

"[i]'Not bad not bad, but uh, what about what you did for the contest?'[/i]"

"I can't even be mad about it, since it's just another misunderstanding…unintended lie… from my side of things."

“But then I had a thought.”

“‘What if it wasn’t a lie?’”

“What if I was actually good at painting?”

“And after working at it for the past month…”

#Fade in art classroom, possible canvas prop sprite and inco

I “Yeah, no, I can’t unscrew this.”

“For the past three weeks I’ve been staying after school, making use of one of the club rooms to practice.”

O “Yeesh, Inco, did you listen to any of the tips I gave you?”

“Using everything I had at my disposal, namely the textbooks for Mr. Iadakan and how-to tutorials online, I’d stay as late as possible trying to get to the same skill level as Olivia.”

“And as I stare at the horrid acrylic monstrosity before me, I can do nothing but weep at my own inadequacies.”

“Not actually weep, but squinting at the lovecraftian horror before me and I can maybe see a lil progress drowning in the madness of the excess paint.”

“At some point Olivia figured out what I’d been doing.”

“Probably around the time I asked Mr. Iadakan to borrow the keys to the spare room.”

“Every now and then, Olivia would try tutoring me too.”

O “What am I even looking at? Are you trying an abstract sort of thing here?”

“It was an attempt at a self-portrait actually.”

O “Could probably post it online and some rich asshole would buy it.”

I “Is that good?”

O “No. Never trust the opinions of people on the internet.”

O “I learned that the hard way.”

“...”

“After a brief period of awkward silence, I let myself collapse on the stool behind me and toss off the oily apron in frustration.”

“At this rate I’m going to be a double fraud or something.”

#Canvas falls over
“*crrck* *SPLAT*”

“I don’t even have the energy to get angry.”

O "Probably looks better now, at least."

“...How did Olivia get so good at this?”

I “Olivia, please, you’ve gotta have some actual advice for me.”

“She quietly hums to herself, slipping away a notebook she’d had splayed across her lap into her nearby bag.”

O “Well, when I want to draw, it’s usually because I’ve got something on my mind.”

I “What, like, inspiration?”

O “Kinda? Moreso that I just envision something, and I want to put that on canvas.”

“A muse then? I don’t really get it but-”

#crash sound effect?

“The door of the studio flies open, and Damien quickly storms inside.”

D “Inco!? Olivia?! Are you guys here!?”

“He takes heavy breaths as his vision darts around the room.”

“After a moment of surprise, I raise my arm to catch his attention.”

I “Damien? What’s wrong?”

“The hyperactive dilophosaurus spots me, taking a final breath before jogging over.”

D “Guys, I need to ask you something!”

I “What? Is everything alright?”

O “Is something happening?”

“I can’t help but panic; I’ve never seen Damien this flustered.”

D “Do you want to come to the arcade with me and Liz?”

“...” #drawn out

I “Is.. is that it?”

D “Yeah! That’s what I said!”

O “Wait, when was this decided?!”

I “I thought something bad had happened.”

D “Nope! Just asking. Liz already has the car prepped and everything.”

I “Oh.”

“I probably should’ve expected that, but still…”

I “How did you know we were here?”

D “I didn’t! I just kept opening doors until I found you two!”

D “I’ve been at it for a while, actually.”

“Damien’s eyes dart to the canvas that lies on the floor next to me.”

D “You working on your next masterpiece?”

D “Oooh! Painting sideways is probably one of your trade secrets, huh?”

#thumbs up

“Olivia hides her snicker with her hand.”

D “Don’t worry, I won’t tell a soul!”

I “...Yeah, that’s right.”

I “Don’t tell anybody.”

“I lean down to pick up the canvas and place it upright, deciding to remove the ugly painting and place it in the corner of the room to dry.”

D “Anyway, how about it?”

O “To the arcade..?”

“The olive baryonyx fidgets, her brow lowered in contemplation as she considers the question.”

I “The arcade? Uh..”

“I check the time on my phone.”

“By my estimate, I’ll probably have enough time to take the last bus or metro home.”

I “Sure, why not?”

D “Alright! Let’s go!”

O “W-Wait! Don’t just-”

#fade to black

“Damien grabs my arm and practically drags me with him, leaving Olivia to wheel herself in a flustered panic as she tries to catch up.”

#fade to hallway

#transition to outside school, Liz standing to the side from where Damien and Inco enter frame

L “Inco, Olivia, there you are.”

L “Damien was taking so long to get you so I thought I’d try checking.”

“This time both Damien and I are wheezing for air.”

“Despite Olivia’s protests and hesitation, Damien had wasted no time in grabbing her by the handlebars and sprinting for the exit.”

“I had chased after them, all the while Olivia screamed like a banshee as she was pushed through the hallway at a breakneck pace.”[cw]

I “Yeah…ha…just…ha…”

“I take a deep breath and stand upright.”

“Olivia’s claws have dug into her armrest, and she’s definitely trying to kill Damien with her glare which he happily ignores.”

I “Why didn’t you just message me or something?”

L “I wanted to but-”

D “Didn’t wanna ruin your concentration, man.”

D “You’ve been staying late for forever now.”

“I can’t hide the wince.”

“It hadn’t occurred to me that more people would notice.”

D “Ah, relax, not like you’re the only one.”

L “Yeah, I sometimes need to stay behind for student council and club meetings.”

I “Right, sure. So uh…”

L “C’mon, the car’s in the student section.”

“The dino duo start toward the student parking lot, heading towards a rather old but well-kept sedan.”

“Olivia grumbles silently to herself, but follows after nonetheless.”

D “C’mon dude, it’ll take a few minutes to get Olivia in and then thirty to get to the arcade.”

O “It won’t take that long damn it!”

“Olivia huffs and wheels herself to the passenger side, opening the door for herself.”

I “Do you need any-”

O “It’s fine.”

“To punctuate her statement, Olivia uses her strong arms to lift herself on her armrests.”

“Then with more grace than I thought possible from the olive scaled girl, she manages to flop down into the passenger seat.”

“I stare at the abandoned chair, wondering where to put it.”

L “I’ve got room in the trunk, Inco.”

O “Hurry up already.”

“The trunk lid pops up with a heavy thunk to punctuate that.”

“It takes me more time than I’d like to admit to figure out how to undo the locks to actually collapse the chair, but once it’s done I’m able to slide it into the spacious storage area easily.”

“Damien had already hopped through the window of the front passenger seat by the time I’m done ,as if he’d practiced the maneuver.”

“I simply open the door behind Liz’s seat and watch as a pile of soda cans empty onto the pavement below.”[cx][cy]

D “Ah, sorry, those’re from this morning.”

I “Surprised Liz doesn’t make you use a bag.”

L “I do.”

“Damien pulls up an overflowing plastic bag as if it were a trophy.”

I “Uh, why haven’t you tossed all those bottles out already?”

L “I’m saving them for a project about recycling. Plus, I’m also going to use a couple of them for a small art project. Saves me the trouble of going out and finding aluminum.”

D “And I get to drink as much soda as I want!”

“I don’t really say anything as Damien scoops out the rest of the cans from the floor of the car and puts them in a new bag, which he then stuffs in the car’s trunk before giving me and Olivia a thumb’s up.”

D “Aight dudes, we’re good to go!”

“I nod and slink into the semi-clean seat.”

“My hand searches for the buckle of the seatbelt and brushes against something warm and soft.”

“There’s a tiny gasp next to me and the comfortable mystery in my hand is yanked away.”

I “Huh?”

“I look to Olivia, her hand held to her chest. Her green face has a scarlet tinge and her mirrorshade eyes glare holes through my head.”

I “You okay?”

“The emerald scaled girl turns her maw from me.”

“I stifle a mystery chuckle at that.”

“The warmth on my palm fades however and leaves my hand feeling lost.”

L “Okay, all the safety checks are done.”

“Liz gets in the drivers’ seat and grips the steering wheel.”

“Outside, she’s craning her neck to check on the mirrors and tires.”

I “Wait, Liz drives with her head sticking out the window?”

“Liz pokes her head in.”

L “What’s that?”

“Her neck snakes inside and coils around the hook[cz] in the middle of the car.”

“Then with practiced motion her neck continually coils til her head sits atop the neck roll, as if no different from someone putting on shoes.”

"It kind of looks like a giant scale-covered scarf.”

“There’s even still enough space for her to see the windows and check behind her.”

L “Inco?”

I “Hm? Uh, it wasn’t anything important.”

L “Alright.”

I “But uh, the city, right?”

I “I’d actually been wanting to see it a bit more up-close, for Iadakan’s class.”

D “Do you know how much gas money it’d burn through to take a detour around here?”

I “No”

#advances to this line immediately after the last, inco is getting cut off
D “Good, cause neither do I! Let’s do it.”

L “Hey, what? No!”

L “I barely have enough as-is!”

O “The view on the way’s fine.”

O “I’m looking forward to it as well.”

I “You sure?”

O “Yeah, I’ll point out some stuff I remember along the way.”

I “Mm, you’re my tour guide now?”

O “Don’t make me change my mind.”

L “Glad that’s settled.”

L “Everyone buckled in right?”

“Liz pulls away from the school parking lot, starting down the opposite direction I’ve always entered and exited.”

“Weird to think, but the edge of my world was as close as a right turn out of my own school.”

“Then again, I still haven’t been living here long.”

D “Anybody want a station?”

“I don’t think I’ve ever listened to the radio here, either.”

“Liz and Olivia hardly seem to glance in Damien’s direction, as well.”

D “Suit yourselves!”

“Within the span of a few seconds, the natural ambience of the road is replaced with the loud sound of decades-old rock music, sending vibrations throughout the car and everybody in it.”

“Just as fast as it comes, however, it stops as Liz haphazardly yanks the volume knob counter-clockwise, toning the music down to a bearable level.”

“Damien frowns for a moment, but he doesn’t seem to contest the driver’s decision.”

“Before long, the dense forestry starts giving way to more urban developments.”

“More and more decorative palm trees start dotting the paths as well.”

“The silhouette of the city gets closer, and we approach one of those spaghetti junctions leading up to it.”

“The result of decades of poor infrastructure decisions, multimillion dollar projects promising to fix all the traffic if they just built one more overpass.”

“Olivia taps my shoulder.”

“I look back to her, she’s looking intently out the window, inches from me.”

“Scanning around for something.”

“Suddenly, she points with her other hand.”

O “There.”

I “Huh?”

O “Under the overpass up here.”

“As we cross under one of the bridges I see an overgrowth of native flora climbing up and around the supporting pillars.”

“At the angle we’re traveling on the road, the cityscape is visible between a couple of vines and the edge of another pillar.”

"I can see the jagged and broken remnants of the old downtown, the buildings cracked and faded, crumbling with disuse and age."

"But jutting out of this ghetto, the lines of the various ultra-modern skyscrapers claw towards the sky."

"Like they're trying to escape their damaged past."

I "Wow…"

O "Pretty great, huh?"

“It’s not until I notice exactly what Olivia is highlighting, the faded paint of graffiti, a myriad of clashing styles forming into an ill-contained, yet beautiful mural of chaos.”

“Olivia continued pointing out her personal vistas along the way to the arcade.”

“I follow her clawed finger more closely as she points, highlighting easily missable colors secreted away in the confining concrete and rebar. Tucked away plant-life, decorated family stores, the graffiti desecrated walls in alleyways and underpasses.”

“All subjects that make me wish I’d had my camera on hand to capture as we pass them by to be hidden away again.”

“Even as the skyscrapers overtake my view, Olivia’s able to point out how certain buildings are built at just the right angle to reflect light onto each other.”[da]

L “Here we are!”

“I’m almost disappointed when we pull into the arcade parking lot.”

“Large glass windows covered in sunbleached promotional leaflets adorn the front of the arcade, and the building itself looks a couple decades old.”

“This place was probably successful in the past, but I can only imagine they break even nowadays.”

“Though maybe the recent resurgence of ‘retro-deco' could change that.”

O “I can show you more on the return trip, c’mon.”

“Guess she must’ve seen my brief hesitance.”

“Liz unlocks the trunk, and I hop out to get Olivia’s chair.”

"It takes me more than I'd like to admit to heave the thing out of Liz's trunk."

"Christ, this thing is heavy."

"And how exactly do I open it?"

"Maybe…here? I can just-"

#sfx metal crashing/a smacking effect

I "SSSSON OF A BITCH!"

"As I check to make sure I've still got all my fingers, I see Olivia laughing through the passenger window."

O "Seriously? Defeated by a chair?"

I "Let's see you do it, then."

"Olivia grabs an armrest in either claw, and heaves herself in."

"With a loud SNAP, the chair opens by momentum alone."

O "Easy."

"Olivia glides by me, head held high and tongue protruding proudly from her mouth."

O "Good to go, Damien."

“How does this thing even open?”

O “...”

“I fiddle with the handle of the trunk for an uncomfortably long amount of time before I’m able to figure out how to open it.”

“Push and [i]then[/i] lift, Inco.”

“With that obstacle out of the way, I heave the steel chair out of the trunk, narrowly avoiding denting Liz’s car with it.”

“I hope she didn’t see that.”

“I peer into the rear windshield.”

“She did.”[db]

“Either way, I carry the chair to the rear passenger door and set it down.”

“...Do I have to unfold it for her?”

“I look around the steel frame, searching for some kind of lever or switch to make it go up.”

“I find [i]something[/i] that depresses, but it doesn’t seem to do anything.”

“...Maybe the direct approach?”

“I put a foot on the lower part of the chair’s steel frame, pulling the rest of it upwards in an attempt to get it to rise.”

“I stop as soon as I hear the squeaking sound of metal, scared that I might have broken something.”

“With a sigh, I look towards Olivia, ready to ask for help.”

“...only to spot her laughing her ass off in the back seat of the car.”

“It takes a while for her to even notice me staring at her, but when she does, she rolls the window down.”

#show olivia shit eating grin

O “S-Seriously? You can’t- Pff-”

I “Well if it’s so easy, why don’t you do it?”

O “Sure thing, dude.”

“Her door opens and she leans partway out, supporting herself only on the folded up chair.”

“It’s a quick and violent movement, the chair is lifted for a split second and unfolded by momentum alone.”

O “Gotta show it who's in charge.”

“I can only nod, Olivia once again proving her mastery of the chair by easily guiding herself into the seat with her arm

strength alone.”

O “Okay, good to go.”

D “Sweeeeeet.”[dc]

“Damien hurries us inside, and I can tell he’s the most excited to be here out of anybody.”

#show arcadebackground

#show the whole crew’s sprites?

D “Dude, I love this place!

D “Me and my little brother used to scrounge for change to come here after school!”

"Liz takes a look at the floor before quickly pulling her head away."

L “I…don’t think any of us have been here before."

L "Damien, why you don't show us-"

"The dino in question is already deeply engrossed in a Dino-Dino-Revolution game."

"As Liz once again brings her head down into "bridge-of-snoot" pinching levels, Olivia speaks up."

O “I've been here before.”

O “You don’t need to babysit me."

L “Great! Why don't you show Inco around, and I'll go with Damien."

“Liz looks at the pink frilled teen, her hands wringing together in worry.”

L "I-I've always wanted to try one of those two-player gun thingies…"

"I can see Olivia raise an eyebrow in the blacklight."

O "The railgun games?"

L "Y-yeah, those…."

"If I didn't know better, I'd think Liz was planning on splitting up from the beginning."

"All these dark corners, away from prying eyes."

"Where Olivia and I could wheel off and…"

"I-I mean, where she and Damien could go off!"

"...do I?"

#sfx crash

D "LIIIIIIIIZ! I think I broke something!"

"Liz heaves another sinusoidal sigh."

#inco arm cross

I “Seriously, Damien?”

O “...”

#show Olivia annoyed

L “Oh come on, it’s perfectly even and fair!”

I “You sure about this, Liz? We could just all stick together.” [dd]

“The long-necked dino looks around the arcade nervously.”

“As much as I want to protest the suggestion, it might be for the best.”

“Liz wants to stick with Damien, probably to make sure he doesn’t do more damage.”

“And Olivia knows this place as well, so she’d know all the best games.”

“We’ve already been spending time together after school, so why not?”

I “I”m not against the idea, just uh...”

#olivia shocked/closest ‘huh’ equivalent

O “You’re agreeing with Liz now?”

“She lets out a sigh and sinks a bit into her chair.”

O “You really want to hang off my shoulder all afternoon?”

I “Come on, don’t you do the same when it comes to your homework?”

“Olivia groans at that, and I can barely suppress a smirk as I wait for her to decide.”

“Eventually, she replies with a flustered sigh and avoids eye contact with me.”

O “Fiiiine, Sure, let’s just go then.”

“Liz seems to take this as her queue to leave, and she quickly pulls Damien away deep into the arcade.”

“Meanwhile, Olivia begins to roll ahead without even looking at me, forcing me to speed walk to catch up to her.”

#fade to another section of the arcade

“Olivia’s eyes seem distant as she looks over the various game cabinets in the room.”

“Silver iris’ dancing to and fro, a soft hum sounding from her cheeks.”

“I try and follow where her gaze lingers, but she seems to be constantly drifting to something new every other moment while deep in her own thoughts.”

“And as we carry on slowly, the creeping awkwardness in my stomach gnaws away at me.”

“I’ve no clue what to do right now. The point of this excursion was to relax.”

“It feels rude to interrupt her, but she definitely knows better than me.”

I “Say, Olivia.”

“My voice brings her back to the current moment with a start, her hands maneuvering her chair around to look at me fully.”

I “What uh, what game should we try first?”

“The baryonyx shrugs her shoulders.”

O “Anything.”

“That’s not helping.”

I “I don’t really know, though.”

“It’s not like I’ve ever been to this place before.”

I “Like, what about one of your favorites, then?”

O “My favorites?”

I “Er, yeah.”

“The look of surprise from her is quickly hidden by her turning her chair back around.”

O “Fine, my favorites then.”

“She pushes her wheelchair with purpose towards a particularly large screen in the corner.”

“Looking at it closer, there’s a large block connected to it, and dull multi-colored sticks hanging off the sides with wires.”

O “Damn it.”

I “Hm?”

“I look up at the title above the screen”

I “‘Ruin Robbers?’”

“The more I look at it the more I see where splotches of fresh paint barely cover poorly done marker graffiti.”

“Olivia’s pout is so prominent as she glares at the base of the funny block on the ground.”

O “...They updated it...”

I “So it should be better then, right?”

“Her pout breaks, transforming into a depressed frown as her eyes seem to gloss over.”

“I try to follow her gaze to the metal plate at the base to try and better understand.”

I “Machine looks pretty well-maintained if you ask me.”

I “Don’t see what would be wrong with it.”

“As I do, I hear her let out a guttural growl out of her clenched jaw.”

O “They added a foot pedal for the cover action.”

“I test the plate, feeling it sink down and noticing the video demo on screen changes to a screen with a bunch of ‘ASS’ with numbers next to each instance.”

“Wait, so. Oh. OH!”

O “This sucks.”

“Olivia’s hands curl into fists as she continues glaring at the arcade machine.”

“Her glare, while carrying a lot of annoyance with it, is just as

equally filled with sadness.”

“A twinge runs through my chest when I look back to the moping dino girl.”

[de]
“The nuance of one of her favored past-times has been changed in a way to almost rob her of it.”

“The thought strikes a painful cord in my heart, though I know I had zero hand in the game update.”

“All the same, to see the clover scaled girl look so morose…”

“I turn my eyes away to my feet, the sensation leaving as I do, and a flash of brilliance overcomes me as I look at my loafers.”

I “Hey, I got an idea-”

“She cuts me off with a growl.”

O “I know what you’re gonna say, and the answer is no.”

I “So you’re willing to just give up because you can’t play it easily?”

O “Yes.”

“Olivia’s response leaves me a bit floored.”

“Her hateful eyes leer venomously at her former favorite game, but I know my idea will work.”

I “Okay, you play then.”

O “Haven’t you been paying attention?! I [i]ca-[/i]”

I “I’ll handle the pedal work.”[df]

“Olivia’s words are left hanging as she tries to process what I said.”

“Her confused gaze wanders between me and the flat rectangle on the floor, looking so goofy I have to withhold a chuckle on fear of her clawing me.”

“She must have realized though as she snatches the lightgun from my hand, her cheeks bearing a red hue.”

O “Fine.”

O “One game.”

“She looks at the lightgun in her hand and takes a deep breath.”

O “You better do your job right, Inco.”

“I give Olivia a nod, and she wheels herself right next to the arcade machine.”

O "Give me your hand."

"She hardly waits for me to respond before gripping my wrist like a fussy mother."

"Those smooth scales against my skin again…"

"I'm glad the lights are low here."

O "I squeeze, you hit the pedal. Got it?"

"I barely manage to nod before Olivia shoots her way into a game."

#fade to black, pause to imply timeskip

I “N-Not so tight!”

O “Dude, hit the damn pedal!”

O “It’s like playing with controller lag.”

O “INCO!”

I “Sorry!”

#fade back in

"Finally, our last life spent, Olivia releases her grip on my wrist."

O “I preferred when the cover was on the controller.”

O "You make a pretty lousy button, Inco."

"Despite her disparaging remark, she shoots me a smile."

O "C'mon, let's move on."

I “Are you sure?”

O "Yeah."

"Olivia gives the machine one last disappointed look before tossing the cheap plastic pistol back in its holster."

O “There’s better games anyway.”

O “Let’s go.”

“Despite her smile, I can see her alabaster eyes become downcast.”

“A stray thought, from before I really got to know Olivia, careens to the forefront of my mind.”

[i]D “Sometime along the way people started calling her Hotwheels, don’t remember really who or when.”[/i]

[i]D “But I do know it’s proof she’s got that fire in her.”[/i]

“A fire in her.”

“Before she can roll away too far my hand takes hold of one of her chair’s grips, jolting the dino girl from her sullen stupor.”

I “Say, I’ve got an idea, Hotwheels.”

I “Why don’t we try the fighting game you were so good at?”

O “The fighting ga- I-”

“Olivia’s jaw clicks shut and her hands wring together tightly.”

I “Arcade cabinets can’t change, right?”

O “I mean-”

“Her gaze turns towards the opposite end of the arcade, and I can hear the loud hollers of competition from here.”

I “C’mon Hotwheels, what do you say?”

“The name seems to invigorate her, her glacier irises hardening and her ivory claws touching at her wheels.”

“An eerie grin creeps across her features, tongue polishing an incisor as her predatory eyes latch onto a particular cabinet in the farside.”

“Olivia picks a direction and speeds off, parting the sea of sweaty dinos and leaving a small space of safety in her wake.”

“For a second, I’m taken aback by the ferocity Olivia manages to rush off in the direction of the arcade machine.”

“In a way, it reminds me of my first day in school, when she plowed through the entire student body and sent me crashing against a nearby wall.”

“Though this time, as she makes more and more distance, a bead of emptiness forms in my stomach that grows the further away she moves.”

“After a short while passing some digital pachinko machines, she looks back at me for a moment as if to confirm my presence and to say ‘don’t lose me’.”

“And then yanks her wheelchair to launch herself through the building towards a new destination.”

I “Wha- hey!”

“I finally give chase, following after the sound of her squeaking wheels, all while doing my best to avoid the rest of the awestruck players that just witnessed the high-speed dino girl shoving them aside in her wake.”

“As I get closer, the atmosphere seems to grow thicker, the very air becoming dank and heavy, almost as if someone dialed a humidifier up to eleven.”

“For a second, I have to stop in my tracks to catch my breath and try to cool off a bit as my shades begin to fog up.”

“So this is the power of the fighting game crowd…”

“As I catch my breath and allow my lungs to adjust to the sudden increase in humidity, I notice that Olivia only keeps getting further and further away from me.”

“As she turns and vanishes into the crowd, a strange feeling begins to overcome me, one I can’t fully explain to myself.”

“A tight squeeze in my chest that makes my gut feel empty and cold... Almost as if the very warmth that coursed through my blood was leaving me.”

“How strange. I wonder if it’s because of something that I ate.”

“I start to look around for any sign of Olivia, be it the sound of her squeaking wheels, or the grumbles of angry arcade goers who got shoved out of her way.”

“That’s when I spot Liz—or rather, Liz’s head—sticking above the crowds.”

“I sigh with relief at the first familiar sight I had seen in the last few minutes.”

D "Yo! There he is!"

"As I get closer, Damien - and Liz's body - hove into view."

"Still no sight of Olivia, maybe she's…"

"*Squeak*"

"There she is."

“About ten feet away, I spot the basil baryonyx come to a screeching halt next to a particular cabinet that’s occupied by somebody else.”

“She removes a shiny coin from her pocket, placing it firmly down

on the controls of the current player who hardly glances at her."

"As I step closer, I'm able to overhear the exchange between the two dinos."

"The grease-ball ankylosaur, without even looking away from the cabinet, starts rattling off his credentials to Olivia as if it was a job interview."

??? "You know I'm the best Jurasskick player this side of Volcaldera, right? Double 'S' ranked, three online tournament wins… besides, it's fifty cents, not-"

O "Shut up and nut up, already."

"Olivia's voice causes the ankylosaur to grimace and finally turn his head."

??? "You really want to try me?"

??? "Look Tiny Tim, you gotta know that I'm-"

"His jaw clicks shut as his eyes manage to sweep above, and then down, to Olivia, his eyes squinting as his retina slowly adjust to the low lighting of something not displaying brightly colored pixelated characters."

??? "Bro, you know you can't be bringing chairs over here, not after last summer."

"Olivia growls and raises a fist, and I think the pale scaled dino finally sees who is challenging him."

"His maw flaps helplessly as he tries to explain himself before just stopping himself completely."

??? "Nevermind."

??? "Sorry."

“The gator girl sighs and taps a finger on the quarter she’d placed down.”

O “Rules say you can’t refuse, right?”

“His head tilts in confusion.”

O “Y’know? You look to be the new champ here, right?”

??? “Yyyyeah, I am, how’d you-”

O “This is the champs’ cabinet, right?”

“Damien’s come over by this point, followed closely by Liz's head."

I “Champs’ cabinet?”

D “Unofficial, but that’s the oldest one here.”

D “Been here since the dawn of time.”

D “It’s like, sacred or something.”

“I look over the old machine, the paint on it dull and chipping away, and positively covered in marker ink to the point that the only legible thing on it is a very juvenile edit to the game’s title.”

I “This thing?”

D “Yeah, man, they only let the head honchos actually use it.”

“I shrug, accepting his explanation.”

“I look back to Olivia, who's having a withering staredown with the squat guy she’d challenged.”

??? “Look, uh, lady. I’m a big deal here. Buster’o’nutz, crown champ in all of Volcaldera.”

Buster “This particular Jurrasskick machine’s got a history.”

Buster “It happens to be the same machine that Daino ‘The Rex’ Go managed to parry-”

O “Quit stalling and fight me already!”

Buster “I’m not! I’m just, uh… setting the stage is all.”

Buster “Plus, you think [i]you're[/i] the only challenger I’ve got?”

“I look around, noticing that there was now a group surrounding us.”

Buster “On my title as champion, I’ll take all comers now!”

“A hushed whisper goes through the crowd.”

O “Finally, I-”

Buster “Form a line now.”

O “O-kay?”

Buster “Tallest to smallest.”

O “What!?”

Buster “No cutting.”

D “Oh, heck yeah. We’re gonna wipe the floor with you, Buster.”

I “W-Wait…”

L “[i]WHAT!?[/i]”

L “I don’t even play video games!”

I “And I’m not really a gamer, either!”

Buster “Too bad. Consider it the blood tax.”

“I want to protest further, but Olivia’s head turns towards me with a pleading look on her face.”

"Those big daffodil eyes, boring into me…"

L “Besides, you think I want to put my hands on THAT thing? Who knows where-”

#interrupted

I "We'll do it!"

L “Inco!!”

D "YESSSSSSSSSS!"

D “Come on, Liz, it won’t be that bad!”

D “You’re still by the entrance, right? Hold tight, I’ll come get you!”

“Damien pushes back through the small group around us, following Liz’s neck to find the rest of her.”

“Her head swivels around and gives chase, her pleads to not have to play falling on deaf ears.”

“In the end she must have relented, because she shuffles up to the rest of the group.”

L “Fine. Let’s just make this quick.”

“Liz reluctantly steps forward towards the arcade cabinet, a crooked smile forming on the self-proclaimed champion’s face.”

#fade to black

“It doesn’t take long for Liz to completely lose.”

“The large anklyosaur’s hands move like a blur as they dance across the controls, pummeling their digital opponent into the ground.”

“As boastful as he was earlier, he at least proved that he was skilled at Jurasskick, the screen displaying [i]’Perfect[/i] after only a minute against Liz.”

“Liz crosses her arms and starts heading back to her old seat near the entrance, head in tow with a pout.”

“Buster leans his head back against his clasped hands to make a show that it was no big deal.”

Buster “Next victim!”

“Alright, I can do this.”

“I mentally prepare myself and take a step forward to the cabinet,”

“And nearly bump into Damien who’d done the same.”

D “He said ‘tallest to smallest’, bruv.”

I “What? No way, I’m taller than you.”

O “Hurry up already.”

Buster “... It is pretty close-”

#Damien flexes his top flap to angle itself higher, and he grins a bit coyly

Buster “Good enough for me.”

D “Alright!”

“Damien struts to the cabinet and jams his hands in his pocket for his change.”

“...”

“Is there a whole piggy bank in there?”

Buster “... Haven’t seen your group around before.”

Buster “Tourists?”

D “Huh? Oh, nah, ‘Liv and I used to come here all the time.”

D “Life’s been tough, y’know, so we got some friends to come along this lil’ trip down memory lane.”

D “Lighten the mood a bit.”

Buster “Mm.”

D “This place hasn’t changed much in the years, either.”

D “Aha!”

“He hoists the quarters high and jams them in the slot.”

“Once more, the screen lights up and the character-selection music busts in.”

“Buster considers his selection.”

“... And ultimately chooses the same character.”

“Damien jams on the buttons and picks his right after and-”

“What’s with that death glare?”

O “Damien just picked a counter to his character.”

O “Probably expects all of us to be beginners.”

“Buster does seem a bit more tense now.”

O “Been a while since then, though-hkk”

“Her explanation is cut short as her words take on a scratchy quality to them.”

I “Hey, you okay?”

O “What? Um… I’m fine.”

I “I can go and refill your canteen pretty quick.”

O “...”

O “Sure, thanks.”

“She reaches behind her and unhooks her severely dented water bottle from her chair."

“There’s something to look into for Christmas.”

“I think I saw the water fountain by the entrance over there.”

“Although I can’t imagine the water here is very good-”

“Christmas, what? What am I thinking?”

“I haven’t gotten anyone a gift like that before.”

“Focus, Inco. You’re just getting some water.”

“I retrace my steps to where I think the entrance is, passing through the aisle lit by game screens.”

L “You guys are done already?”

#Liz head drop down behind Inco

I “No, just refilling Olivia’s bottle.”

“Guess I’m gonna miss Damien’s match.”

I “Say, Liz…”

I “This sticker here, what is it?”

“Her head comes in close as she eyes the weird brand on the canteen.”

L “Oh, that’s from some really old show.”

L “Like, back in the 90s old.”

L “Why?”

I “Just curious is all.”

L “Well, I never really asked Olivia about it.”

“Maybe I should, after all I think I recall a reviewer I’m subscribed to talk about it before.”

“Though I could never really get into older stuff, the animation always looks so choppy.”

“Recapping the bottle, me and the brachio-head make our way back to the fighting game section.”

“It’s surprising that Damien and Buster are still playing, this time both of their hands slamming furiously on the controls.”

“A crowd has even formed around the duo, exchanging low whispers as they watch the old crt screen.”

“I pick out Olivia at the front of the crowd close to the cabinet so she’s able to clearly watch.”

“She’s hyper focused, to the point that when I swish the bottle in front of her face she just leans over to keep watching.”

“Then I get a devious idea.”

“I hold the canteen above her muzzle and carefully tip it over until a few drops fall on her face.”

“Her tongue laps along her lips and swipes up the nourishing droplets before glaring at me.”

O “Hey!”

I “Here you go, fresh from the latrine.”

O “Har.”

“She takes the bottle and downs most of it right away before clearing her throat.”

O “...Thanks.”

I “How’s Damien’s match going?”

O “Well...”

O “He’s getting too aggressive! He picked a zoner even though Buster’s using a grappler! He’s also missing all of his DPs and opening himself up for so many punishes!”

I “Uh… pardon…?”

O “Er, I mean he’s… not doing alright.”

O “It’s not looking good for him, he’s probably about to-”

D “No, no, noooo!!”

“Olivia and I watch from the sidelines as, over the next few seconds, Buster pulls off an impressive series of moves that crush Damien’s character into the ground.”

“Almost like he was waiting for us to get back.”

Buster “Wow, you actually knew how to play.”

“Buster jams an accusing finger my way, as though marking me for death.”

Buster “You’re next.”

“Damien’s expression carries a hint of disappointment as he steps away from the cabinet, but he quickly peps up once he walks back over to us.”

D “Wow, he’s pretty good!”

#show Damien thumbs up

D “I softened him up for you! You got a real shot now!”

“I can’t help but feel slightly more positive at Damien’s encouragement, however misplaced.”

I “Yeah. Thanks, Damien.”

“I receive one more reassuring smile from the dilophosaurus.

O “Good luck, Inco.”

O “You’re gonna need it.”

“And a not-so-reassuring statement from Olivia…”

#fade to black

“As I move up to the controls, I realize that I have no idea what character to select."

"Dozen of characters in various fighting poses wink back at me in the dim lights of the arcade.

“I recall an old saying Coach Solly had said.”

Coach "[i]IF WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING, THEN THE OPPOSING TEAM CERTAINLY CAN'T ANTICIPATE OUR FUTURE ACTIONS[/i]."

"I tap my joystick over til the large question mark in the middle of the screen is highlighted, to the astonishment of spectators and my visibly nervous opponent."

"The game begins, and my opponent besides me seems exceptionally calm as he manipulates his controls."

"Compared to me, trying out every button and stick input to figure out what the heck I'm doing."

"Unlike Damien who at least looked like he was holding his own against the bloated Buster, I was getting the digital crap kicked out of me."

"Every attempt I made was met by my character being grabbed and thrown in some ridiculously elaborate way."

"By the time the 'Perfect' announcement plays out on the screen I can feel my wrists cramping from the crazy amount of button mashing I'd done in under a minute."

"At least I lasted a lil longer than Liz."

Buster "Don't feel too bad, I [i]am[/i] the best here after all!"

"His snort filled laughter grates on my ears as I walk back to my friends, all of them staring daggers at the pasty scaled dino."

"The rest of the crowd are in an uproar along with him and I can feel my ears heat up at the attention."

"Olivia's eyes are narrowed as she wheels herself into position, her tail lashing roughly against the ground as she waits for the laughter to die down and her turn to finally begin."

“She takes hold of the controls, not even bothering to wipe them down and locks eyes with Buster.”

O “Ready to get schooled, you dental flosser!?”

Buster “Dental what?”

Buster “...”

“Buster doesn’t even reply to Olivia’s unorthodox insult. Instead, he motions for Olivia to insert her coins into the machine.”

Buster “You know, you can still back out of this.”

“Olivia replies to Buster by inserting her coins slowly, all the while glaring at Buster with what I can only describe as a predatory leer.”

“She then slams her fist on the start button, at which point the machine comes to life and blares its music.”

“Buster instantly moves his cursor towards a new character, one I had never seen before.”

“Damien next to me lets out a soft gasp.”

I “What? What’s wrong?”

D “Buster’s picking, like, [i]the[/i] most OP character there is!"

I "Is that… bad?"

D "Well, he's not only a grappler but-"

"Damien continued with a torrent of game jargon, none of which I understood."

“Buster lets out a chuckle and turns to look at Olivia, all the while giving her a smug grin.”

“Olivia doesn’t seem at all phazed by Buster’s character choice, clicking her joystick lazily.”

“The character is blue, and looks a little like your average dino folk, except for the fact that she has long flowing whiskers and looks to be floating in the air using a jetstream of blue liquid-like energy, which implies that the character controlled water using magic or the game’s equivalent of magic.”

“Soon as Olivia picks the character, the game’s announcer blares the name aloud.”

??? “Wani-Long!”

“Damien turns to look at me. The excitement in his face is overbearing.”

D “That’s Olivia’s main! Oh man, this’ll be one hell of a fight if Olivia’s breaking her out.”

I “Uh… so… is this Wani-Long a good character?”

D “Wani-long’s basically a shoto, which means she’s-”

"More technical gobbledygook."

"I swear, one of these days I've got to sit down and learn this game properly"

"Can't be too embarrassed when Olivia and I start playing."

"Wait, why would we do that…?"

I “Wow. That, uh… sounds busted.”

I “So uh, how good is Olivia with her?”

“Damien’s reply is to only give me a wide big grin.”

D “Oh, you’ll see!”

"A loud noise from the cabinet signals the start of Olivia's match."

“Given what Damien was going on about, I expected it to be a flurry of activity."

“No, instead it looked like…”

“Nothing at all.”

“On the screen both characters are just shifting back and forth, the joysticks in Olivia’s and Buster’s hands clacking about furiously.”

“Honestly it looks more like they’re attempting to make their digital avatars tap dance.”

D “Oooooh.”

I “Wait did I miss something?”

“I don’t want to turn my eyes away in case anything happens.”

D “No, like, they’re trying to get a read on each other.”

I “Uh…”

D “It’s like they’re trying to predict what the other will do so they can counter and steal the match.”

“Oh.”

“So like they’re sizi-”

“There’s a heavy *crack* and *thump* on the floor in front of me.”

“Olivia’s tail lashed at the base of the cabinet, while Buster’s thagomizer had managed to crack into the concrete floor beneath him.”

“On screen the character’s finally made contact.”

“And sent each other flying in opposite directions.”

“Behind me the crowd started cheering, finally excited that there was some actual action happening.”

“Damien is hollering next to me, cheering on Olivia with all his might.”

“Though the excitement dies down again as the duo resume their cyber-posturing.”

“My eyes darted between Olivia and Buster.”

"Olivia seemed entirely absorbed with the match: Her eyes were wide, focusing on every movement like a seasoned predator."

"Buster, however, seems to be trying his best not to scream in rage."

"With ten seconds left, Olivia launches into a full assault, pushing Buster's character back with a string of attacks."

"He manages to hold on with a sliver of health just as time reaches zero."

??? "WINNER: WANI-LONG!"

"The entire crowd goes absolutely mental as the game's announcers signals Olivia's victory."

"And I can't help but cheer along with them."

“Olivia slumps back on her mobile seat and lets out a sigh before returning to her original position.”

“Buster lets out a snort, twists and stretches his neck, and cracks his knuckles before once again gripping the controls tight.”

??? “Round Two!”

??? “Clash n’ Trash!”

“The crowds return to a more silent state of observing the match closely, only low murmurs as they gawk at the two highly skilled players.”

“The words passed around reach me, attempting to draw my eyes away.”

??? “-weird for him-”

??? “-surprised he's not doing the-

??? “- is he playing with her?”

D “C’MON OLIVIA!”

“Damien’s shout above the rest of them nearly blew my eardrums, but I shared his sentiment as the stylized characters exchanged simple blows.”

“The timer continues to tick down, Buster once again being put on the defensive."

“Recalling all the previous bouts, Buster had always been in control, but I never got the impression of him being this… passive.”

“The countdown once again hits zero, this time with Olivia’s character slouching in defeat and the crowd cheering again, though less enthusiastically than before.”

D “You got this Olivia! Just one more win and you’re champ again!”

“Olivia’s shoulders tense up at what he said, and all eyes stare directly at her.”

O “Damien!”

D “C’mon Hotwheels, show them why you’re the best!”

“She groans a bit and refocuses on the screen.”

“The group simmers down to silence in anticipation of the start of the final match.”

“The sudden silence actually catches me off-guard for a second.”

“Long enough for my own doubts to catch up to me.”

"The way Buster's been playing, it's like he's…not even trying."

#brief pause

“The match starts, and the hype flares right back up.”

“That’s stupid of me to even think, he’s a gamerbro ‘champion’ type, he’s got way too much to lose.”

“And yet…”

I “Hey, Damien…?”

D “Yeah?”

I "Is there something… weird about how Buster’s playing?"

"Damien's normally happy expression is replaced by a dour, puckered frown."

D "Oh man, you notice it too?"

D "Guess I'm not paranoid after all."

I “Like, I didn’t really watch your match, but was he always so-”

D “Passive? No.”

D “But like, these two are crazy good, so maybe this is all mind games.”

D "It's not like he's letting her win…"

“We glance back at the game unfolding, and I focus on Busters’ hand movements.”

“Sure enough, as Olivia launches a furious combo, Buster hesitates just enough to let himself get hit by the first strike."

D “That’s… brilliant timing.”

I “This is crazy…”

D “Huh?”

"A sudden realization hit me like an avalanche."

"The way Buster looked down at Olivia, how he didn't want to play her match, all those excuses…"

"Was he throwing because of her [i]condition[/i]?"

I “It isn’t right…"

D "Huh?"

I “He’s just throwing the match because Olivia’s disabled!”

I “And what, to make her feel better?”

I “You know as well as I do she’s had enough of that!”

I "Of people treating her like a child, like she can't do anything herself!"

#olivia smiles and damien is considering at this line
“The crowd whoops again.”

"This time, it sounds hollow, mocking…."

D “Listen, Inco…"

"Damien turns to me, his frill sagging with concern."

D "What we came here for is a good time.”

D “If she can’t tell… what’s the harm?”

I “What’s the-"

"Something inside me comes alive at Damien's suggestion."

"Something hot and angry."

I "Is that all this really is for you?”

I “What the hell, dude!”

I “We need to say something!”

D “What? No!”

D “What would raising an issue even accomplish here?”

D “Everyone’s already having a great time!”

D “Be reasonable, man!”

“I look over the crowd again. The match is about halfway done, judging by the remaining health-pools.”

“I already know what I’m going to say.”

>>Incite the crowd
>>Call out Buster (+1 Inco)

>>Call out Buster (+1 Inco)
"It doesn't matter what Damien said."

"I can't stand to see Olivia get treated like this."

"I shrug Damien's arm off my shoulder before sliding through the crowd."

D "Inco, bro, just leave it alone!"

"As if this twisted knot in my chest would let me."

"The crowd is so caught up in the match they hardly notice a human slinking between them."

"As I make my way to the front, I can see there's a respective space between the two combatants and the rest of the cheering crowd."

"Ugh… Or maybe it's just Buster's natural odor causing it."

"I find a good angle off to the side where I can observe both of them."

"Olivia seems to have the upper hand, with Buster purposefully eating hits from her left and right."

"There's no way I can call him out like this."

"So what if I…"

I "Let's go Buster!"

"I have to cup my hands together to fight the noise of the crowd."

"I can see Liz's head, floating above the scene like a satellite, zero-in on my voice, a look of disbelief on her face."

"I hope I can explain myself to everyone later."

I "C'mon, are you gonna let this girl beat you!?"

I "Stop stalling and finish her!"

"There's a flicker of recognition from both battlers as my voice finally registers."

"Olivia's shoulders tense up, her head sinking lower as she starts practically hammering away on the machine."

"Buster, however, seems embarrassed."

"I didn't think it was possible, but he's even sweatier now than before."

Buster "J-just shut up, man!"

"His thagomizer slams down on the floor in frustration."

I "Whatever, it's like you're not even trying to win!"

I "Show her who's the boss of this arcade!"

"There's a noticeable growl from the overweight ankylo as he re-focuses on the game."

"I can see his pixelated avatar leap over the head of Olivia's character as the noise of the crowd becomes noticeably louder."

"This time, it's Olivia forced on the defensive."

"The timer in the middle of the screen ticks down the seconds, flanked by their dwindling healthbars."

"It's down to the wire…"

"...the crowd is going wild…"

"...and then, the voice of the announcer:"

??? "K-O!!"

#scene black with fade

"There's a moment of silence from the crowd as everyone tries to work out who won."

??? "..."

#label CheerBuster

??? "WANI-LONG: WIN!"
#probably have this text scroll slowly or something, I dunno

#fade back in

"I'm the first one to start to cheer, pounding my fists in the air as I do so."

"A second later, the makeshift audience joins in."

“People pour over the two players, congratulating them on the entertaining match.”

“I follow too, thinking of how to really explain myself to Olivia.”

“She’s probably pissed I cheered for her opponent, in hindsight not the smartest move.”

“But…”

“I figured what Olivia really wanted wasn’t a win, but competition.”

??? “What’s up, man? You having an off day or something?”

??? “Yeah something was off with you that entire match.”

??? “What the hell, you never hesitate to wipe the floor with me

or the other guys.”

Buster “Shut the-”

??? “Yo, Buster, you simping?”

Buster “Piss off!”

“The green dino damsel is missing, instead it’s now just the orange ankylo and some others chatting casually.”

Buster “You.”

“His pudgy finger prods at my chest.”

I “Me?”

Buster “...She’s better than I expected…”

I “So, you WERE sandbagging on purpose!”

“The accusation has his posse turn questioning looks his way but he speaks up.”

Buster “...A lil’...”

Buster “Your buddy, finhead, gave me some sobstory about her and I felt bad okay?”

“Damien did? I shake my head, focusing more on where Olivia could be.”

I “Right, well, do you know where she went?”

Buster “Excused herself to go to the bathroom.”

I “Thanks.”

#Inco leaves, then returns a second later.
#Buster sprite disinterested points to the left side

Buster “It’s that way.”

#inco leaves the other direction

??? “You’re still kinda simping, though.”

Buster “Shut the hell up, Dave.”

“…”

“I look around for her, hoping I didn’t ruin her fun.”

“But she isn’t here.”

“A void opens in my stomach and I try searching for her.”

“I see a hint of her tail turning the corner.”

“I bolt after the extra limb as it vanishes into a hallway.”

“Without a thought, I turn down the hall and spot her, head bowed low as her arms work the wheels of her chair lifelessly.”

>>Convergence point

>>Incite the crowd
"It doesn't matter what Damien said."

"I can't let Olivia get treated like this."

"I shrug Damien's arm off my shoulder before sliding through the

crowd."

D "Inco, bro, just leave it alone!"

"As if this twisted knot in my chest would let me."

I “Hey!”

“The people around me cover their ears from my loud shout.”

I “Play a fair game, man!”

I “She’s just as capable of playing!”

“With eyes on me now, I can feel rivulets of sweat drip down my forehead.”

I “Stop throwing the match! Fight her for real!”

I “It’s people like you that make this world worse for the disenfranchised!”

“My heart pumps roughly in my chest and my face is burning red, but I focus entirely on the two players in front who’d stopped playing entirely now.”

“I didn’t even realize I was pointing directly at Buster until now.”

“The world is at a standstill completely now, the only noise left coming from the abandoned arcade cabinet counting down.”

“Everyone is staring.”

“Wondering.”

“My mouth feels dry and full of cotton as time drags on until-”

??? “TIME!”

??? “WANI-LONG: WIN!”

“Reality resumes, even fast-forwarding as chaos erupts from the audience.”

“I’m being pushed and jeered at, colorfully vulgar names thrown in my face.”

“Others have moved to Buster, words spoken too quietly to be heard while he bashfully scratches his cheek.”

D “Inco!”

“Damien grabs me by the arm and hauls me from the middle of the impromptu moshpit.”

“Liz and him are frowning, the shared look of disappointment making my head sink between my shoulders.”

L “What was that all about?!”

D “Things were going just fine, man! Why the sudden show?!”

I “Well I…”

I “I was trying to do the right thing!”

I “I shouldn’t have to explain that!”

L “In what world was making an ass out yourself the ‘right thing’?”

I “Buster was going easy on Olivia!”

L “Look, I’m going outside. I’ll be in the car when you’re ready to leave.”

I “Even his friends think it was stupid!”

“I turn back to Buster to make my point.”

“He’s still being grilled by the other arcade goers.”

??? “Throwing matches? What’s up, man?”

??? “I knew something was off.”

??? “What the hell, you never hesitate to wipe the floor with me or the other guys.”

Buster “Shut the-”

??? “Yo, Buster, you simping?”

Buster “Piss off.”

“Buster jams a finger Damiens’ direction.”

“He was covering himself with his head frills and inching his way to the outer group.”

“He must’ve felt the eyes on him because he books it immediately.”

Buster “That guy sold me some sob story about his crippled friend.”

Buster “The bitch in the wheelchair’s some hermit and this is the first time she’s been outside in years or something.”

Buster “So I figured I’d go easy on her, so fucking what? I don’t want to be responsible for crushing her hopes.”

??? “Well, when you put it that way…”

“... I hadn’t considered that.”

“Before the feeling can recede it’s ripped into the light as Buster jams his finger to me next.”

Buster “And you just went and blew everything up.”

Buster “Get a freakin’ grip.”

I “I don’t nechk-need to be lectured by you!”

I “You’re telling [i]me[i/] to get a grip?!”

I “You, you spend your time at [i]arcades[i/]! You play games for [i]kids[i/]!!”

“He guffaws a bit, but his expression remains still.”

??? “You’re making this worse for yourself, dude.”

I “And your [i]LOSER[i/] cronies are actually picking your side here?”

I “This is just a popularity contest at this point!”

I “Right, Olivia?”

…

“Buster cocks an eyebrow.”

“I look at the spot where Olivia was just a second ago, but she isn’t there.”

“In fact, it doesn’t look like she’s anywhere nearby.”

Buster “She went off to the bathroom or something in a hurry. Think she was crying.”

“I let out a groan.”

I “Oh, now look at what you did!”

Buster “Oh, brother.”

I “I’m out of here.”

#Inco leaves, then returns a second later.

#Buster sprite pointing

Buster “It’s that way.”

#inco leaves in the other direction

??? “You’re still kinda simping, though.”

Buster “Shut the hell up, Dave.”

“…”

“I look around for her, hoping she’d understand why I did what I did.”

“But she isn’t here.”

“A void opens in my stomach and I intensify my search.”

“There’s not many areas to hide in a place like this. Maybe the bathrooms?”

>>convergence
“I spot a sign on the far wall that points out my destination; a hallway branching from the main floor of the arcade.”

“As I get closer, I barely spot the hint of a tail turning the corner.”

“I hurry after the extra limb as it vanishes down the hallway.”

“I caught sight of her at the end of the hall, next to the woman’s bathroom, head bowed low as her shaking arms grip the wheels of her chair.”

I “Olivia!”

“She flinches, turning her head to face me with surprise.”

“Her yellow eyes waver as she stares, and I take the opportunity to close the distance between us.”

I “What’s wrong?”

I “Look, that Buster guy’s an asshole. Don’t worry about him.”

“A tiresome sigh passes through her clenched teeth.”

I “H-Hey, you okay?”

“What was a simple knotted feeling becomes a burning whip through my chest as Olivia’s expression wavers.”

“I almost want to reach for the girl to remind her I’m still here, but my conscience gets the better of me.”

O “I’m just.. worried, Inco.”

“There’s a defeated tone to her voice.”

O “I didn’t think about it before, not until after I won.”

O “I’m having fun, just like the old days, but..”

O “He wasn’t taking me seriously. No way he was.”

“A mixed expression of nostalgia and disappointment covers her face.”

“I know he wasn’t. But why is she taking this so hard?”

I “You don’t have to worry so much about it, Olivia.”

“Olivia grimaces at that, a sharp [i]tch[/i] coming from her maw.”

O “You don’t get it.”

O “I don’t think I’ve ever had someone sandbag for me before.”

“I can’t help but frown.”

I “Nobody’s ever gone easy on you before?”

“Olivia shakes her head.”

O “Of course they have, but not somebody I was [i]actually[/i] competing against, you know?”

O “I can’t help but think about the past.”

O “All my wins, all those happy memories of this place, of playing that game...”

O “What if they’re all lies? What if I only ever won because people were humoring me?”

O “I really tried my hardest to be able to do something that everybody else did.”

“Her wavering expression finally collapses into one of genuine sadness.”

O “What if the whole time, people were just… playing along?”

O “I’m scared, Inco.”

O “If that’s the case, did any of that really… matter?”

“Her shoulders drop as I struggle to find the words.”

“I couldn’t imagine being in her position.”

“A lifetime of happy memories, all called into question by a single game.”

>>Continuance

>>Incite the crowd continuance
I “Olivia, that’s not true.”

“She pauses again, taking a long calming breath, letting it all out in the most apathetic sigh.”

I “Just because he was a jerk doesn’t mean that everybody else is, alright?”

I “There's still good people in the world.”

“Olivia snorts a dismissive laugh.”

O “Yeah? Like who?”

I “Well, you know.”

I “Like Damien and Liz.”

I “And… Mr. Iadakan, right?.”

“Olivia mumbles at that one.”

I “If he were here right now he’d tell you the exact same thing.”

O “Yeah, right.”

“There's uncertainty in her dismissal. We both know the guy, he’s gotta be the most optimistic guy on the planet.”

“I notice her hands grip at the wheels of her chair.”

I “…We can leave, if that makes you feel better.”

“Several seconds pass in complete silence as the baryonyx holds her eyes shut, weighing the choice.”

“Finally she looks at me and shakes her head.”

O “Nah, let’s go back in.”

O “The past is the past.”

“Her words carry a sense of totality to them.”

“She weakly pushes herself past me, slowly moving back towards

the doorway”

“It suddenly occurs to me that she shouldn’t have to exert herself after what she’s been through.”

I “Here, let me push you.”

“Olivia’s head raises to look back at me, an unreadable expression on her face as I grab the handlebars.”

O “Thanks, Inco…”

“With her permission, I awkwardly shuffle her out of the dank and dirty alley, back into the arcade and where Damien is waving happily for us.”

#Fade to black

“We’d spent the rest of the day at the arcade, though there was an unsettled feeling at the bottom of my stomach the entire time.”

“I don’t really get it, whenever I was just having fun with the chair-bound girl, that emptiness would vanish and be replaced by a bizarre twisting in my chest.”

“It wasn’t really unpleasant, more… weird.”

“I struggle to find words to describe how I felt, but I enjoyed the sensations when they made themselves known.”

“Even so, the burning question at the back of my mind lingers.”

“Did Olivia have fun?”

“As we resettle into the car, I turn to the girl next to me and-”

“My voice catches as the setting sun catches her eyes and the

warm light blends with her crystalline eyes.”

D “Say, Olivia, I’m sorry about earlier.”

“While she shrugs, her eyes never steer away from mine.”

O “S’fine Damien.”

L “Still… Did you at least have fun today?”

“Even when she nods our eyes remain locked.”

O “Wasn’t all bad.”

“I try to work my mouth, to force some words through to convey an apology of my own.”

“Her simple smile makes me stop trying.”

“Olivia’s the first to break eye contact, closing them as she lets her head sink back into her headrest.”

>>Denouement

>>Call out buster continuance
I “Olivia…”

“She stares pleadingly at me, her golden eyes doing their best waterworks impression.”

I “You know that’s not true.”

O “Huh?”

I “Those happy memories you’ve had, no one can take those away from you.”

I “They’re yours, and no one can change them, but you.”

“I kneel down, taking her hands in mine.”

“Despite those massive claws, they feel as fragile as glass in my hand.”

I “So stop letting others determine who you were, Olivia!”

I “And go out there and show them who you ARE.”

“Her fingers tighten around my own.”

“She’s as still as a log now. I’m not even sure she’s breathing.”

O “I’ve got to show them who I am…”

“I loosen my grip, careful not to slash myself on her claws.”

“Slowly, like some sort of great ancient beast, she raises herself up in her chair.”

O “You’re wrong, Inco.”

I “Huh?”

O “I’m not gonna show them who I am.”

“She beams at me, a full-mouth smile.”

“Her eyes, shining like the sun, flash with the same mischief I’ve always known her to have.”

O “I’m going to show them who I can be.”

O “C’mon!”

“Olivia wheels herself away, pausing just long enough to snatch me around the waist with her tail.”

I “W-wait, Olivia, where are we going?!”

I “O-Olivia!”

#fade to back to the arcade

“I manage to regain my footing as Olivia storms back into the arcade.”

“Without a pause, she wheels herself right back to the same section of the arcade as before.”

“Liz and Damien look over from their conversation at the sound of Olivia’s squeaky wheel.”

“Well, Damien did. Liz just kinda… loomed.”

D “Hey, Olivia! Look, Liz said I should-“

O “No time. Where’d he go?”

D “Who, Inco? I think he’s right behind you, ‘Liv.”

O “No, Buster. Is he still around?”

“Liz raises her head above the machines, slowly turning around like some sort of periscope.”

L “…There he is, over by the vending machines.”

O “Let’s go!”

“Something about Olivia’s energy brooks no disagreement, and all three of us break into a run to keep up with her.”

“Before long, Buster’s ponderous bulk peaks out from amid the machines.”

O “You!”

“Buster turns, his mouth crammed full of Dino-ritos.”

O “I want a rematch! And fair this time: No throwing, no sandbagging, no crowd distracting us.”

“Buster takes his time finishing his snack, chewing loudly with his mouth fully open.”

“As he finishes, he extends one nacho-flavored hand towards Olivia.”

Buster “Deal.”

#fade to black

“Without the crowd around hyping things up, the rematch was…”

“A lot easier to follow.”

“Little wonder that the bloated dino boy was a big deal, even with Olivia going all out and even using different characters Buster still trounced her.”

“Though she didn’t seem to mind.”

“In fact, the two were talking so much Damien had to refill Olivia’s canteen twice.”

“All of it went over my head, honestly.”

“Still, as the two talked on and on I felt something growing in the pit of my stomach that made me want to try and challenge Buster again.”

“Not like I’d actually win, but at least I’d be doing something.”

“Instead I stood by and watched as the best of three rounds slowly became the best of nine.”

“By that time, Olivia’d run out of spare quarters.”

“She still ended up winning by one round.”

“I don’t really get it…”

“Whenever I’m just having fun with the chair-bound girl, that emptiness would vanish and be replaced by a bizarre twisting in my chest...”

“It wasn’t really unpleasant, more… weird...”

“I struggle to find words to describe how I felt, but I enjoyed the sensations when they made themselves known.”

“At some point, Buster had pointed at me, and with a hushed voice had said something to Olivia, and her face lit up so red I thought she’d choked on something.”

“I wonder what he said, because that had caused Olivia to attempt to try and drag me away to play some other games.”

“Whatever.”

“After that, we’d just hopped from game to game, and that mystery in my gut and stomach were renewed.”

“I was so distracted by them that I lost every game to Olivia.”

"Yeah. Distracted."

"As we resettle into the car, I turn to the girl next to me and-"

"My voice catches as the setting sun catches her eyes and the warm light blends with her crystalline eyes."

D "Say, Olivia, I'm sorry about earlier."

"While she shrugs, her eyes never steer away from mine."

O "S'fine Damien."

L "Still… Did you at least have fun today?"

"Even when she nods our eyes remain locked."

O "Wasn't all bad."

"I try to work my mouth, to force some words through to convey an apology of my own."

"Her simple smile makes me stop trying."

"Olivia's the first to break eye contact, closing them as she lets her head sink back into her headrest."

>>Denouement
-Still in the car, Inco giving directions to Liz so she can take him home
-Inner monologue. Goes over the events of the chapter
-Only Inco's POV. No Damien, Liz, or Olivia

_____

Chapter 6.5
Inco falls ill due to the sudden change in the weather from hot to cold. Despite his best effort not to, he winds up catching a

nasty flu that leaves him unable to attend school for at least four days. Far as Inco's perspective goes, nasty flu notwithstanding, he's actually enjoying not having to deal with classes or any of the strange happenings that have become his life as of late. That said, he does miss the company of his newfound friends, and wishes that he could at least see them in person rather than being relegated to speaking to them via texts or the occasional phone call.

Inco winds up getting his wish when Olivia suddenly shows up at his house and pretty much makes herself his guest for the evening under the excuse that she's bringing him all of that week's work from history and art class. Inco is a bit too delusional to really argue, but he is lucid enough to realize that Olivia didn't need to do that, as he has been receiving PDFs from all his teachers. He also can't figure out how Olivia made her way into his house, but he decides to figure that out when he's not as delirious from the fever. On further prodding, Olivia reveals that she's been worried about him and that she wanted to check up on him. On seeing that he's all alone in his own home, Olivia takes it upon herself to watch and care for Inco for the rest of the evening as a way to make it up to him for the art impersonation incident. Inco, having neither the energy nor lucidity to really argue, ends up agreeing to Olivia's plan. As Olivia soon discovers, the reason that Inco's not getting any better health-wise is because he's been eating nothing but instant noodles and other junk stuff that he got from the local gas station before his cold got worse. As he tells Olivia "Soup is good for colds, right?" Olivia, in response to his words, scolds inco for his carelessness and prepares him a real soup so that he can actually start getting better. She also knows how to make a little go a long way considering how poor she is.

By the time the day's finished, Inco's ready to pass out, at which point Olivia further reminds him to take better care of himself before leaving the house. Inco passes out not long after, attributing the entire day to it being a very vivid hallucination.

#scene black with dissolve
#music mood: upbeat fun music | upbeat kinda clashes with the tone of the start, maybe later?

"November… something."
#check that date if we need to

"In all honesty, I can't even remember the date anymore."

"There's been another sudden change in the weather, sending outside temperatures plunging and my own temperature soaring."

"Despite my best efforts, I've caught something bad.”

"Probably from the arcade."

"I knew I shouldn't have ignored the signs.”

“Guess Liz was right after all."

“The worst part is I’m falling out of practice.”

“I’ve tried on and off every few hours to watch a drawing tutorial, but within minutes my consciousness is overtaken by a fog and I retreat back to bed.”

“At this rate, I’ll never actually end up with the skill people thought I had at the beginning of that contest…”

#scene inco's house

“Between the sunlight obscuring clouds and my own bouts of unconsciousness I’ve completely lost track of how many days I’ve been sick.”

"Doesn’t help that my parents haven't checked on me once this whole time."

"If it wasn't for signing my authorized absence forms, I think they wouldn't even know something was wrong with me."

I "*sluuuurp*”

“I finish off the cup of medicine I’d made, and go back to my

noodles.”

"The only reason I’m even conscious right now is because I figured some soup would help with the splitting headaches."

“And I’ve made sure the pantry is stocked full of cup ramen.”

“I shovel even more instant noodles into my mouth as I lie splayed on the couch, trying to watch… whatever’s on the TV.”

“Eventually, I decide to set the salty goodness aside in favor of scrolling through the notifications on my cell phone.”

"Hmm… plenty from Damien."

"He's been giving me a nearly hourly play-by-play of school."

"Looks like Liz checked in as well."

“With the smuggest ‘I told you so’ that could be delivered digitally.”

"Even Olivia messaged me, and I feel oddly soothed as I read her well-wishes."

“It’s hard to imagine she’d say things like that to anybody else.”

“Maybe she’s coming out of her shell?”

"I suddenly get another notification, this time from Ben, containing a PDF of my homework as well as a simple get-well GIF."

"Every one of my new-found friends are checking in on me."

"It would be nice to see them again soon. In truth, I miss hanging out at school with them."

"Another wave of fuzziness washes over me, so I down another dose of flu meds and follow it up with a gulp from the styrofoam ramen cup."

"Three days, and I haven't seen hide nor tail of-"

#sfx door knocking

"Huh? I thought I already got my grocery delivery today. Or was that yesterday?."

"Either way, I manage to claw my way upright once more, allowing an avalanche of ramen cups and food wrappers to spill to the floor."

“Wow… I really let things get out of hand...”

“My head is spinning as I make the arduous twenty feet journey.”

“A check of the peephole and nothing is there.”

#sfx angry knocking

“Or maybe it’s a small child. TriassiScout cookies sound awesome right now.”

“One hand works to undo the locks, while I’m focusing on finding my wallet with the other.”

#sfx Door opening

“Damn poofy sleeves, if they weren’t so war-”

O "'Sup, Inco."

#sfx indicating Inco's surprise, probably some choreo as well

I "O-Olivia?!"

I "Raptor Jesus, what are you doing here?!"

"If Olivia could shift from foot to foot, she'd be doing it now."

O "Uh, Mr. Iadakan wanted me to give you the project worksheets for his classes."

“A manilla envelope is waved in my face, my dizziness intensifying as my eyes attempt to track the rapidly moving object in front of them.”

I “Oh, the one about baroque. Thanks?”

“I’m pretty sure Ben had just sent me those as a PDF.”

“She snorts and lets the packet go, my hands fumbling to catch it before it hits the floor.”

"The green gator rolls herself through the doorway, as if wandering into someone’s house is an everyday occurrence for her."

O “C’mon, the project isn’t gonna finish itself.”

I “Huh?”

“She’s already wheeled herself to my couch and set a backpack on the coffee table.”

I "Yeah, figured you could use some help on it, or-"

“And balks at the mountain of junk I’d left.”

"I can see her nose crinkle slightly."

O “Damn, Inco, you live like this?”

"Now that the initial shock has worn off, my flu returns with a vengeance.."

"I only manage to stay upright just enough thanks to the support of the wall."

I "What?"

O "Just how sick are you?"

I "Pretty sick."

“The disgust that was on her face is wiped away as she looks at me.”

“Huh, I wonder why-”

“Why’s my floor coming at me-”

“[i][b]*THUMP*[/b][/i]”

#snap to black
#fade back in

I “Owww.”

“After my impromptu tumble, Olivia had done her best to pull me up and get me to the couch.”

“My snuggy DID make it easy to drag me across the smooth floor of my house.”

O “Ookay, forget the project.”

I “What project?”

O “Atta boy.”

“I can’t tell if the dizziness is new or not.”

“Olivia’s already started picking at the trash mountain, moving what she can into a grocery bag.”

“Watching her with my vision going fuzzy only intensifies the vertigo.”

“I guess I should take more of my medicine.”

“I grab a can of soda from the half-empty case on the table, along with the bottle of cough syrup.”

“[i]*pkst*[/i]”

“I upend the can and bottle into the glass I’d been using all week, watching the delicious mixture slowly become my panacea.”

“Giving the glass a good swirl to ensure the best final product, I grin and gulp down my alchemical masterpiece.”

“I don’t get to finish the drink, however, as an olive green tail slams my midsection and makes me spit up the drink all over myself.”

O “The fuck are you drinking?!”

“My only response is a hacking fit.”

O “No wonder you’ve been sick for a week straight!”

I “What? I read online that it makes the medicine go down easier.”

O “Inco, you’ve been drugging yourself with fucking purple drink.”

I “I mean, yeah, it’s purple and I drink it.”

O “Holy crap… how are you alive?”

“Ugh, the smell of my spat up drink irritates my nose, and I feel my stomach roil from both the impact and forced purging.”

“I resist the urge to wretch, feeling all my energy drain away.”

“The gator girl seemed to realize what was about to happen and holds open the half-full bag for me.”

“I will my head forward enough off the couch to violently fill the bag the rest of the way with my midnoon breakfast.”

I “blrugh.”

“I feel so fucking spent again.”

“My vision swims and the world turns counterclockwise.”

“I feel something on my head, and I’m thankful that something soft and warm and soothingly smooth maneuvers it back onto the couch.”

“The blackness of my shut eyelids returns the uprightness of the world, and the numbness I’d grown used to overtakes my limbs.”

O “O-oh my g- Inco?”

O “Inco are you okay?”

O “Oh man, oh man, stay there, I’ll… I’ll figure-”

“Olivia’s voice is drowned out by the overhead fan.”

“Once again, the colors from outside the window bleed and flood into my house.”

“And I’m still without my rent money.”

“Someone’s in here still, they’re bent over something.”

“Hey, you, what’s going on?”

#’it’s not a good time’ cg

“And finally, my being fades into the void…”

“...”

“... …”

“... Oh, god...”

“My head… What year is it…”

“I sit up and glance around the room.”

“Mom and Dad aren’t back yet, even though it’s…”

“Six o’clock.”

“Some business meeting, huh.”

“Wait, no, what’s that smell?”

“Dang, something’s cooking. Smells nice.”

“Guess Mom is home, wonder what the occasion is?”

"Normally it's just re-heated whatever."

“I put the couch pillows back the way my parents like them and head into the kitchen to see what’s up.”

I “Wow Mom, what smells so goo-"

#show olivia with her back turned as though cooking, and the music cuts. she’s surprised at the comment and inco jumps as soon as he sees her.

I “Shit, sorry!”

I “I didn’t know you were still… Oh man, I passed out on you, didn’t I?”

I “The assignment-”

O “It-it’s fine. You feeling any better?”

#olivia winces

O “That’s a silly question, my bad.”

I “I’m feeling about as well as I was before. Headache and all that.”

I “But uh… what exactly are you making?”

O “Well, after you collapsed I panicked.”

O “I had to call Au- [#quick sprite swap to lookback?] Damien’s Mom to ask her what to do, if I should call emergency services…”

O “She said when this happens to Damien she just makes him shepherd's pie and waits for him to sleep it off.”

O “I had to root through your fridge to find out you have jack shit in terms of ingredients.”

O “And your appliances, too. I thought a place as upscale as this would clearly have an air fryer.”

O “...But all I could find was this slow cooker, so I threw the vegetables that hadn't expired into it with some stock.”

O “Should be good for your sinuses, at least.”

“I vaguely remember something along those lines.”

“I step closer to Olivia, peering into the glass window of the cooker.”

I “I didn’t even know we had half of… whatever’s in there.”

O “Really? Why would your parents buy this kind of stuff just to let it rot away in the fridge?”

I “My mom does like to cook, but she doesn’t do it very often. I wish she would.”

“The green gator snorts.”

O “Y’know, I’m only spoiling you because you’re sick.”

I “It’s not that, I just miss… dinner, you know?”

I “Sitting around the dining room table and talking to each other. We don’t really do that anymore, except maybe on holidays.”

"Olivia winces."

O "No kidding. Sorry to pry."

"I can't help but sigh as I think about my lackluster relationship with Mom and Dad."

I "It's alright… anyway, I didn't take [i]you[/i] for the culinary type, Olivia."

"The awkwardness of just standing and staring gets to me, so I choose to take a seat at our island table."

"Man, these chairs are surprisingly comfy."

"This is actually the first time the table was even used since we'd moved in."

"...Thinking about it, Olivia's given me a lot of 'firsts' now."

"Kinda wish Mom would make dinner again, like before she got that promotion."

"Olivia hums to herself as she moves toward the fridge, pulling out the egg carton and scowling after checking it."

O "How often do you get groceries, Inco?"

I "I ordered some earlier."

O "Actual groceries, not that junk."

"Oh."

I "Uh…"

O "God, that's such a waste of money."

O “Imagine if you could cook the food you like.”

“I try to, but my head starts to get a bit lighter.”

“Though now I can practically taste the salivating smell coming from the cooker.”

I “Is that why you’re in Home Ec?”[dg]

“There’s another low hum from her as she considers something.”

O “I got tired of eating discount ramen every night.”

O “And it’s actually relaxing, just keeps my mind and hands busy when I’m alone.”

O “Plus, it’s either this or, y’know, bother [damien’s mom] all the time.”

I “What about your Mom and Dad?”

“The cooker [i]*pings*[i/] signaling the stew was finished.”

“When Olivia takes the lid off a cloud of steam erupts with the rich aroma of cooked meat and vegetables.”

O “Can you grab us some bowls?”

O “I’m guessing they’re in the shelves above.”

“I nod and get up, moving around the table to the shelf with all the bowls.”

“I give the top a quick dust-check, sticking it back in and taking the two under it.”

“Olivia already has the ladle ready, stirring the soup slowly.”

“I set the bowls down next to her, and she ladles in servings for us.”

O “Okay moneybags, back to the couch.”

I “You don’t wanna eat at the table?”

O “I can’t.”

I “What do- oh.”

“The island table doesn’t really have the space for her chair to fit underneath.”

O “Plus, I wanna enjoy this with some quality entertainment.”

O “You’ve got one of those really fancy TVs with all the streaming apps, consider it payment for looking after you.”

I “Sure, sure.”

“I carry both bowls back to the couch, seeing the entire living room has been cleaned up.”

“Man, I really need to make this up to Olivia somehow. Just watching something doesn’t feel like a fair deal at all.”

“Not only cooking but even cleaning up after.”

“I’ll find a way to repay her.”

“I set down our dinner on the coffee table.”

“Before Olivia can say a thing, I place both hands on the corner

of the couch and push."

"Didn't think it'd be so hard, but then again, I am still out of sorts."

"The space created however is enough for Olivia to work the front of her chair in."

"Olivia gives me an appreciative nod, then angles her chair in a way to let her use her tail and the couch's armrest to pivot herself onto it."

O "Thanks."

"I give Olivia a small nod and a smile as I grab my spoon off the table."

"Leaning closer to the bowl, the comforting aroma of the soup wafts up my stuffy nose."

"First time I'm getting goosebumps that aren't caused by cold flashes."

"I get a good spoonful of Olivia's homemade remedy, making sure to get some meat and veggies as well."

"Still piping hot, I blow a bit of air on the spoon to cool it down."

O "Pussy."

I "...What?"

I "Hey, the last thing I need with this fever is 2nd degree burns all over my tongue."

"Olivia just chuckles at my defensiveness."

O "Yeah yeah, whatever doofus."

“Once I felt that the soup is cool enough, I slurp in my first spoonful.”

“My dry, tired eyes close in bliss as the flavors wash over my tastebuds, firing them all off like fireworks.”

“To describe it as just being “good” would’ve been a severe understatement.”

“The stock was rich and hearty.”

“The meat was well-cooked, it could’ve easily fallen off the bone it came from.”

“And the vegetables gave it a nice aromatic touch.”

“All of it well seasoned and spiced.”

“It was like I was experiencing that scene from Stixar’s Raptortouille.”

“I was sensing and seeing the different flavors move and dance around in my mind.”

“For a brief moment, I forgot all about my fever, and only felt the warm presence of the soup envelop me like a cozy blanket.”

O “Is it good?”

“Like a record scratch, I’m taken out of my experience and brought back to earth by the baryonyx’s voice.”

“I look to see Olivia giving me a questioning look, idly crunching and munching her soup.”

“I also realize that I’m sunk into the couch, my arms to the side like a ragdoll’s.”

“Felt like my body was weighed down from both my sickness and the

soup.”

“Guess I [i]really[/i] enjoyed the soup.”

I “Woooow. Olivia, this soup. Is. Amazing.”

“Olivia smiles but rolls her eyes at my enthusiastic compliment.”

O “Ah it’s nothing. I just threw shit together in a pot and called it food. Anyone could do that.”

“Olivia looks away, once again cutting herself short.”

“With weak strength, I lift myself up from the couch’s gravitational pull to better look at the shyinig scalie.”

I “I’m serious! This is the most delicious soup I’ve ever had.”

“Olivia moves her head back closer to me but still avoids my gaze, her smile a little weaker.”

O “Alright, I get it. Don’t have to make it sound better than it is, it’s just helping out your flu-”

I “I’m not saying it because of the flu.”

I “Honestly, you really have a talent for cooking.”

“Olivia turns towards me, her smile still small but filled with honest joy.”

O “You really think so?”

“I nod, even as the soothing warmth of Olivia’s soup settles in, and manage to return her meek smile with my own tired one.”

I “I know so.”

“Her eyes dart around for anything else to focus on, desperately trying to redirect her fluster.”

“She shakes the flush off her face and checks around for her bag.”

O “... Well, uh, I’ll get going.”

I “Going?”

I “Thought you were wanting to get caught up on your shows?”

O “Er, well…”

I “Remote’s right there, it’s the least I can do after your help today.”

I “What were you wanting to watch?”

“She eyes the remote and the oversized screen on our wall.”

O “A few things… nothing in particular.”

O “I remember you asking last month for some recommendations, so I’ve been thinking of a few you might like, but, if you’re sick and all I don’t want to…”

I “Yeah, yeah, I’d love to see what you have.”

I “My parents probably won’t be back to hog it for another few hours.”

“If they come back tonight at all.”

I “So it’s a pretty good time.”

O “You really sure?”

I “Sure, I’m sure.”

I “Show me all about the deep cultural meaning of animated dinosaur folk cartoons.”

O “Oh my g- you’re lucky you’re sick right now.”

I “Yep.”

“Olivia takes the remote and flicks the TV on.”

“After getting over the initial shock of the screen being taller than she is, she navigates to a streaming site and picks some colorful series I’d only seen in passing.”

O “This one has a rough pilot, but it gets better a few episodes in, and the animation is top notch.”

I “Mhm?”

“She flips the first episode on and an establishing fight scene unravels while Olivia moves back by the couch with me.”

“Then, to my surprise, she hefts herself out of her chair and into the cushion next to me.”

“I move my arm out of the way to make room.”

O “Oh, sorry, should’ve asked.”

I “Of course you’re welcome to sit.”

O “I know, but… Thanks.”

“We focus back on the show.”

“At least, I try to.”

“Olivia’s glancing my way after every joke and expensive shot to analyze my reaction.”

“And when it’s not for that it’s a forewarning that something a bit cheesy was about to happen.”

“Eventually the first episode closes, the heroes are ready to begin their journey ‘for real’ the next episode.”

“The credits scroll and Olivia swishes her hair aside with her fingertips.”

O “So, uh, yeah. It’s pretty good, I guess.”

O “I-I dunno, what do you think?”

I “I liked it, yeah.”

O “Really?!”

O “Well, they got the whole season… Do you want to see more?”

I “Wait, didn’t you say you wanted to catch up on your shows?”

I “This is the pilot episode.”

“She fumbles the remote in her hands and has to catch it mid-air.”

O “Well, ye-yeah.”

O “Just figure you should know what’s all going on so you’re not lost, yknow?”

O “But if you want to keep watching this, that’s fun too.”

“She quickly pushes the button to start the next episode without my response.”

“‘Cute’ is all that runs through my mind at her attempts to cover for her small mistake.”

“She’s probably just refreshing her memory and-”

“Hm, I wonder why I thought ‘cute’ fit.”

“Well, it does.”

“Hell, practically endearing, every time she glances over as if I wouldn’t enjoy the show.”

I “Sure, mom and dad aren’t in any rush back.”

“The characters onscreen freeze.”

I “Oh, shoot, did the wifi go out again?”

“I try to stand up, but a brutishly heavy limb anchors my lap back down.”

“Olivia’s tail feels like a boulder across my legs, keeping me from standing.”

I “Olivia?”

O “I just paused it, Inco.”

I “Oh.”

“There’s a complicated expression on her face.”

I “Uh…”

O “I uh…”

O “Is it normal?”

I “Is what normal?”

“She chews her lip slowly in consideration.”

O “You’re parents. Like, are they not really going to be back?”

“I shrug.”

I “They’re always busy with work.”

“I feel a shifting next to me.”

“Olivia’s inched herself closer.”

I “Like, when I think about it, I barely seem them at all.”

“More shifting.”

I “I wonder sometimes…”

“The tail shifts to my abdomen now.”

I “Does anyone even care?”

“All the movement has stopped, as if reality itself has paused.”

“Man, I must be more tired than I thought.”

“I feel my head sway as my muscles ease into putty.”

O “I’m sure they do.”

“I look at Olivia, who is shoulder to shoulder with me now.”

O “I mean, da’s kinda the same.”

I “Hm?”

O “...”

O “He’s always busy too.”

O “Working long distance and everything.”

I “So he doesn-”

“I stop myself as I see the faint wetness in Olivia’s eyes.”

I “Sorry…”

“Her eyes close and a somber sigh escapes her lips.”

O “No, it’s fine.”

O “I get it Inco.”

“There’s a silence hanging over us now.”

“I copy after the sweet girl next to me, letting my eyes slide close and a sad breath loose.”

“After some time, she breaks the silence with soft and tender words.”

O “Of course they care.”

O “Just like da. They gotta work.”

I “But what about me?”

“I wince at just how pathetic that sounded.”

O “It’s for you, ya doof.”

O “How else could you afford all these nice things.”

“Her words grow quieter as time goes on, and my body sinks into numbness again.”

O “Da cares enough to work for my sake.”

O “I owe it to him to do the same and look after myself.”

O “And you should do the same for your parents AND yourself.”

“My world goes horizontal, and I find my head atop the comfiest pillow I’d ever felt.”

“I nod, and the nod turns into a nuzzle into that pillow.”

“Above me Olivia yelps.”

I “Hm?”

O “Nothing.”

I “Kay.”

“A soothingly cool something rubs across my head, drawing me further and further into restful peace.”

“...”

“By the time I wake up, Olivia’s gone.”

“I check my phone for the time, only to realize it’s four in the morning.”

“I can’t help but groan as I sit up on the couch, but instead of feeling horrible like I had the past few days, I felt surprisingly well.”

“There’s no doubt that I have Olivia to thank. Hell, I might even be able to go to school today.”

“I wonder if any of that soup is left. She did leave it in the fridge, right?”

“I shuffle over to the appliance and open up the door, allowing my eyes to adjust to the light. It only takes a second for me to spot the cooking pot that held her delicious meal.”

“It’s completely empty.”

“...Thanks, guys.”

#chapter end

O "Dude, seriously, relax. I can't have you dying on me."

O "Besides, this would be, like, the saddest place to go."

"She arches an eyebrow at the heaps of junk food wrappers surrounding my makeshift bed."

O "Is this all you've been eating this whole time?"

"I groan in response, pulling my wizard robes of warmth tighter around me."

"What is this, twenty questions?"

I "Just hand me that, will you?"

"I gesture vaguely towards the purple liquid that's keeping me alive."

O "Not until you promise to eat some real food."

I "I'm not really in much of a position to be in the kitchen right now."

O "Aren't your parents around? I'd figure they'd be all over you."

"Olivia pitches her voice up, swooning dramatically."

O " 'Oooh, my poor sweet Inco! Let mummy-wummy tuck you in."

"My bitter laughter quickly gives way to a hacking, retching cough."

I "Yeah, I wish."

I "I don't even think my parents know I'm sick."

"Olivia's grin slides slowly off her face."

#music shift into something more sad/contemplative

"Whether from the drugs or the fever, I suddenly find myself

unable to keep from spilling my guts."

I "They haven't checked in to see how I'm doing, no calls during the day making sure I'm okay…"

I "For once, I'd just love to hear 'Hey Inco, how are you doing?' from either of them."

I "My whole life, I've always felt I was like, an afterthought to them…"

"I pick idly at a snag in the blanket."

I "When we moved here, they didn't even tell me until It was time to pack up and go."

O "Seriously? They didn't even talk to you about it?"

"I don't even try to disguise my disgust."

I "Nope. Not a word."

I "They don't talk to me about [i]anything[/i]."

I "I don't even know why we moved! Just that it was for their work."

I "Sometimes, I feel like a stranger in my own home."

I "They're gone before I get up, and no one's home when I crash during the night."

I "We don't even see each other on the weekends."

I "Like, they wouldn't even notice if I left, and never came back."

I "...They might even want me to-"

O "Stop it, Inco."

"Olivia's voice is strained."

"I hadn't realized, but this whole time, Olivia's been gripping the armrests of her chair hard."

"A second or two passes before she speaks again, her voice more normal."

#music returns to normal

O "I'm sure they don't want you gone."

O "Who else would they get to laze about on their couch all day?"

"It's a weak attempt at humor, but I can't help but smile."

O "So, um… Want me to go over the assignment with you?"

"Olivia gestures to the envelope left on the coffee table."

I "Wait, are you serious?"

"I watch in horror as Olivia begins shoving papers into my lap."

"Some are stuck together with gum, and others are damp and soggy with what I hope is water."

"I don't even think these are my assignments, either."

"Is this a… a page from a book?"

"I could just tell her that Ben's been giving me my assignments,

and stop this deluge of detritus."

"But I find that I can't. Something about how pleased Olivia looks shuts me up."

"When she finishes, Olivia sits back with a self-satisfied expression."

O "Don't say I never do anything for you, Inco."

I "...Thanks, Olivia."

"I put the wads of papers aside."

I "Anything else in there for me?"

O "Well…"

"Wait, is she blushing?"

"Olivia pulls out a large plastic take-out cylinder filled with an inviting-looking liquid inside."

O "I, uh, made this soup for you…"

I "[i]You[/i] made soup? For [i]me[/i]"

"Olivia's blush deepens."

O "Shut up!"

O "I can still pour this out on you, you know."

O "Don't think I won't."

I "I wouldn't dare."

"Olivia gives me a fierce glare, marred only by a small smirk on her face."

O "'You know, when I was sick, my da would always make this me."

"Olivia cradles the soup in her lap."

O "Always made me feel better."

O "I was in and out of the hospital a lot, as a kid."

O "My legs, and stuff."

O "So, whenever I was there, Dad would come with his soup, promising it would make me all better."

"She chuckles slightly."

O "Guess it didn't work in the end."

I "..."

O "..."

"Whatever this… moment is between us, it passes quickly."

"Olivia shakes her head, forcing a laugh."

O "Anyways, I'm sure it'll combat whatever you managed to catch."

O "I knew you shouldn't have touched anything in that arcade."

I "I still don't understand how I'm the only one sick. We were all there!"

O "Maybe it was some human-only thing."

I "Is that a thing?"

"I narrow my eyes suspiciously."

O "Sure is."

O "'Cuz thing that affects us is a…"

O "Dinovirus."

I "..."

I "I hate you, so much right now."

"Olivia playfully throws a handful of trash in my face."

O "Shut up, you love me."

I "Th-th-that's not-"

"My fever must be spiking, because my face feels like it's burning."

"Giggling, Olivia wheels herself towards the kitchen, soup cradled in her lap.'

O "Ahh, you make it too easy."

"I briefly consider throwing the bottle of my special purple juice at her."

"Nah, too precious for that."

"Washing down another dose with some zesty drink, I can hear Olivia singing some wordless tune under her breath."

O "Where're your freaking things?"

I "Hmm?"

O "Pots."

I "Beats me. I'm not the most culinarily-gifted."

O "Yeah, I can see that."

O "What do you eat, anyways?"

I "I dunno, I usually just grab food on the way home."

O "Well that must be nice, havin' loadsa' munnah'."

"These meds must be kicking in harder than I expected, because I swear Olivia just slipped into a comedy cockney accent for a moment."

"And why is everything spinning?"

I "It's more like no one ever taught me to cook."

I "I've tried to follow stuff online but the results were… less than edible."

O "If you cook as well as you sketch, I can believe that."

I "Yeah, well, not all of us can be a great as you."

I "Who taught you, anyways? Or is it just your incredible raw talent?"

O "what, like my legs don't work so the universe made me really good at drawing?"

"Olivia's got the soup on the stove now, giving her some time to wheel back to the couch."

O "I dunno… I guess I always enjoyed it."

O "Couldn't go outside much with the other kids, so I would practice sketching instead."

O "It was either that or rot my brain playing video games."

O "So, I just kept practicing. I did some other theory classes in school, and, well, here I am."

I "Those other classes, were those with Iadakan too?"

"Olivia shifts a little in her chair, a blur of motion to my eyes."

"What is in this cold medicine?"

O "Well, not before high school, no."

O "My old schools were pretty shitty, and the programs they offered even worse."

O "I knew St. Hammonds was supposed to be good for you know, artsy-fartsy crap like that."

O "So when I started, seeing Iadakan actually know what he was talking about, it was like entering a whole other world."

O "I mean, we were still fingerpainting in middle school, and all of the sudden I was learning posing and vanishing points!"

O "It was the first time I really connected with a teacher."

O "The first time I felt like more than just a charity case."

I "..."

"Bubbling from the stove interrupts our conversation."

"Olivia wheels herself off, leaving me to pull myself slowly into a sitting position."

"Ugh… it feels like I'm on one of those spinning wheel rides at the fair."

"I just hope I don't barf all over the place, or worse, rippen the-"

O "Here we go."

O "Eat up baldie, before you keel over on me."

"Olivia hands me a plastic storage container full of soup."

I "Wuzzit?"

"I look at the three Olivias sitting in front of me, her own container of soup in her hands.."

"Wait, wasn't there only one of her before?"

O "Look, I couldn't reach your stupid bowls, okay?"

O "So this is better than both of us eating out of the pot."

O "Now budge over."

"Setting her meal on the coffee table, one of the Olivias hauls herself out of her chair and onto the couch."

"The two of us are so close, we're practically touching."

#some banter occurs, Inco succumbs more and more to his illness

"The whirls of color, the shapes:"

"It's too hard to keep my eyes open."

"I'll just close them a while…"

O "Better?"

I "Mmmhmm."

"I can already feel myself relaxing."

"Can't feel my fever anymore."

"Can't feel my face, either."

O "Inco, there's something I…"

O "Something I wanted to talk to you about."

I "Go's aheadish."

I "Just restingsh my eyesh…."

"Not like I'm asleep."

O "Well, ever since that day in Iadakan's studio, I've felt like…"

"As Olivia continues to talk, I can feel myself slipping deeper and deeper into a magnificent void."

"A place where there's no fever, no feeling, no fear."

"Olivia's voice follows me down, and like whispers in a cave, I can catch only a bit of what she's saying."

"It's soothing."

O "Feel like…"

O "...I might be…"

O "..."

"The rest of her words are lost on me as I finally drift off, perfectly content with the world."

#fade to black
#music comes back in slowly. Should feel melancholy, contemplative, unknown

I "Zzz…"

"..."

#pause, time passes
#don't know if we want to fade in from black

"..."

"A small blossom of consciousness interrupts my blissful oblivion."
#trifling gnome

I "Wuzzit?"

"Thoughts, feeling: These sensations and more begin to flood back into the utter nothingness that I had become."

"Blinking my eyes open, all I see is darkness..."

"...Because the lights are off."

"What time is it?"

"Slowly, I manage to find the strength to lift my head off of Olivia's…"

"...Wait, she's not there anymore."

I "Olivia?"

"My voice echoes in my empty home."

"Guess she went home."

"I try to piece together the puzzle that is my drug-affected memory."

"We were talking about… something, right?"

"I lay down to rest my head for a second…"

"A check of my phone reveals that that was four hours ago."

"And a new text message from Olivia."

#I forgot how we did text messages but make this look like that O "Get well soon, Inco."

"A… something, stirs within me."

"It's not my stomach, or my fever: It's something more, something I remember feeling around her before."

"Could it be…?"

"!"

"Do I… L-Like…"

"...Ugh…"

"..."

"...Doesn't feel so bad, actually."

"Think I might be feeling better, afterall."

#chapter end

#Olivia and Inco have a little more light-hearted banter before Olivia goes to heat the soup up. Inco downs a handful of pills to combat his fever, which is really just him getting embarrassed from Olivia's teasing. The two eat together on the couch, with Olivia gets closer and closer, as Inco gets a more loopy. End with Inco slumping down in her lap, falling asleep before Olivia can admit her feelings.

_____

Chapter 7
oct 29
inco and ben are with iadakan in class, iadakan offers an extra credit job to the two helping put together a wedding photoshoot. inco can either take the job, or decline to work on art practice. attending the wedding photoshoot will prompt the rest of the scene (+1 inco (inco is choosing to pursue what he's passionate about and not just chasing a trend))

during the wedding photoshoot inco and ben show up to a fancy venue for various reception photography jobs, inco thinks ben is doing a better job than him, iadakan gives inco some advice about trusting his instincts to tell him the right thing to do and not worry about following what others are doing. inco ends up taking a nice photo near the end

if inco puts everything aside to work on his technique, inco uses the art room after school to learn as innefficiently as possible, liz notices he's a scrub and tells him that school will be closing soon. she sees inco's progress, and suggests that he use his time better

Chapter 7

“

_____
Chapter 7.5
nov 6
inco and olivia are having lunch outside. Scaler is showing Gman around, he recognizes Inco and stops by to chat with Inco. He gives a different response depending on the ending the player is currently headed towards. He leaves with Scaler to continue his inspection/audit of the school.

Later, while going to History class together, olivia gets pulled aside by Mia, inco doesn't notice until he reaches class and goes looking for her after the late bell rings. He finds Mia and Olivia arguing in the hall. Mia had been blackmailing Olivia into swapping her art assignments like she had Inco for several assignments now. Olivia had been going along to avoid being expelled/suspended for the art contest earlier that year. Inco listens in and gets caught. Mia turns the tables on him and pressures him into compliance as well. Inco can either agree immediately or think it over. Agreeing immediately has Mia leave le smugly. Thinking it over has Mia leave them.

Now that Olivia and Inco are alone, he gets her side of things. Olivia defends herself because she's protecting herself and Inco as well. She elaborates more on her side of things, and begs Inco to trust her.
Inco can either trust Olivia or [Let someone know], [Letting someone know] is the correct decision and gives (+1 Inco & Olivia).

If Inco trusts Olivia, Olivia continues to do Mia's homework until Iadakan catches them, he's immensely disappointed and has to report this to Scaler.
[Letting someone know] has Inco convince Olivia to go to Scaler and explain the situation. She's surprised Olivia's admitting this to begin with. Olivia gets some light punishment and some advice. Olivia and Inco leave as Mia's getting chewed out by Scaler.

_____
Chapter 8
nov whocaresth
inco is really shaky about painting at this point. he's in history waiting for class to begin, olivia's starting to tell inco he should probably just stick with photography when the speaker announces all the students are dismissed for the day.

in the auditorium, principal scaler announces the unfortunate death of iadakan the night before. ben is organizing a eulogy, and the students are dismissed for the day due to early release. most students leave aside from a select few, including inco and Olivia, who is catatonically frozen to her place. she refuses to answer inco asking if she's going to be alright, and wheels

herself out of the room. ben stops olivia, and starts talking with her, clearly also upset over the development. make a point to suggest ben is only using olivia as a proxy for his own mourning to feel like a better person, but don't say it outright. inco can either call out ben for using olivia like this, or allow it to continue as it seems like two friends finally mending their relationship after so much turnoil after being confronted with the fleeting reality of life.

Also ben brings up that he wants olivia and inco to help at the eulogy

intervening has olivia wheel herself from the room to be alone, silently thankful to be away, and ben is stunned/livid at inco for calling him out like that, in complete denial for his actions. (+1 inco)
ignoring has inco leave the others alone, he mistakes olivia's look to him for help as one that's just sad over the event.

_____
Chapter 9

Inco is alone in the hallway, contemplating the announcement and trying to console his own feelings over Iadakan passing. During it he accidentally bumps into Scaler, who herself is showing signs of difficulty (Handkerchief or red eyes from crying). Scaler tries to put on a strong comforting persona, telling Inco that if he needs it he can always go to the counsellor or something. Inco however asks Scaler if she's okay, at which point Scaler can give a life lesson that Iadakan had passed over to her when she first started about making the most of his life. Scaler excuses herself when Damien and Liz show up, checking on him since Iadakan had showed some favoritism over Inco and Olivia.

The group moves to find Olivia outside, slowly making her way home. Liz offers to get them dinner, saying that a good meal with friends always cheers her up when she's sad. Damien suggests they eat at Olivia's place since it's the closest. The group move there, and while Liz and Damien are working on the meal, Inco and Olivia are in her room. They have a solid heart to heart, Olivia finally opening up about the loss and looking to Inco to console her. Inco himself finally breaks down, and the two hold each other. During this, it's Olivia that admits her feelings, and her words sound eerily like Scaler's handmedown lesson from Iadakan, sealing the deal and cementing the relationship.

Chapter ends with Inco wheeling Olivia to her dinning room table and sitting right next to her, there hands linked together under the table.

_____

Chapter 10a (Inco and Olivia <4pts)
Campus decorations for christmas, ask olivia out to formal

Chapter 10b (Inco <4 pts, Olivia >=4pts)
Avant-garde art show, ask olivia out to formal

Chapter 10c (Inco >=4pts, Olivia <4pts)
Urban exploration w/damien and liz, ask olivia out to formal

Chapter 10d (Inco and Olivia >=4pts)
Christmas shopping date, ask olivia out to formal

>eulogy/winter formal (ending 1 split before formal)

Inco says bye to his uncaring parents while he waits for the limo to pick him up outside. Inco opens the door to see Olivia in her ending-specific dress.

_____

Chapter 11a
The limo drops them off in front of the school, now decorated for the event. In the gym, there's a small shrine onstage for Iadakan. Olivia goes to leave [something] by the table. Olivia is a speaker at the eulogy, so she goes to see Scaler to get set up, leaving Inco by himself. He runs into Ben and Mia, prompting Ben to reaffirm Inco's commitment to his brand of 'help' to Olivia. Scaler takes the stage to preside over the eulogy. She gives a brief statement herself, and then introduces Olivia to the stage. She rolls onstage, but the pressure becomes too much for her and she leaves. the crowd starts to whisper amongst themselves, Inco misconstrues it as being demeaning and blows up at them before leaving to find her.

Chapter 11b
The limo drops them off in front of the school, now decorated for the event. In the gym, there's a small shrine onstage for

Iadakan. Olivia doesn't leave anything by the table. Olivia speaks at the eulogy, and gets confrontational with the other students, until the crowd turns against her to the point she starts sarcastically slagging them off, which gets her boo'd off the stage. Olivia then declares that she is done with the school, and wheels off.

Inco catches up with her outside of the school, where she continues her rant at him. Inco tries to keep his temper, and tries to get Olivia to go back in and apologize. Olivia realizes this is just so he can save face, and the ensuing argument results in the two breaking up.

Chapter 11c

Inco arrives at Olivia's house, Liz and Damien are already dressed in the living room waiting for Olivia. Liz keys Inco that Olivia's having issues getting dressed. Inco enters and notices something's wrong. Her dress is discarded on the bed and she's still in her usual outfit. Olivia confesses that since Iadakan died she's been holding it together and that going to the Formal would push her over the edge, begging him not to go. Inco's disappointed but agrees not to go and tells the others to go without them.

The two hang out alone playing games and such, Inco remembers that he's at least hanging out with Olivia for the night.

Four months later, Olivia and Inco are hanging out at her place. It's the only place that Olivia goes besides school and Inco's house. She's stopped painting and has lost her passion. The two are discussing what's going to happen after high school. Inco's been accepted into college, and Olivia hasn't applied.

Inco runs into Liz and Damien after school, the two express concern for Olivia's condition and how she's withdrawn after Iadakan's death. Damien has little helpful advice.
On returning to Olivia's home later that day, he finds Ben trying to knock the door down to see Olivia. He gets into one final, heated argument before he tells Ben off and gets him to leave. Inco goes inside to find Olivia curled up in the corner. Olivia makes Inco promise to stay with her.

Chapter 11d

he limo drops them off in front of the school, now decorated for the event. In the gym, there's a small shrine onstage for Iadakan. Olivia drags Inco up to pay her respects, and the two

leave their gifts. Liz and Damien go off to dance, leaving Inco and Olivia alone. Mia and Ben run into them, and Olivia says her piece to Ben in a way that finally gets through to him, before leaving to go get ready for her part of the eulogy. Ben and Inco bury the hatchet. Scaler takes the stage and presides over the Eulogy. Olivia delivers a heartfelt eulogy and goodbye to Iadakan. Afterwards, the dance starts. The party gets more lively as time goes on and people unwind from the more reverent start. Inco's dances with Olivia, there's a buffet, various dance stuff.

June 1st, St. Hammond is having their Senior Day at the park. Inco and Olivia get there first to get a good spot, followed by Liz and Damien. Scaler's going around congratulating the various students, and gives her say to the group as well. Afterwards, Mia and Ben show up, and the group hang out, finally with nothing between them. Damien had broken his arm recently, and the group all sign his cast and leave a little doodle.

Sometime during the summer, Inco and Olivia are hanging out at her place, talking about Inco going to a school he'd been accepted to. Olivia had also been accepted to a new school. They're a good distance apart, so they won't be able to see each other often at all. The two make plans to see each other when they can, but it'll be hard to keep in touch.

_____

>ending/epilogue

Chapter 12a[dh]

Inco finds Olivia by the stairwell, completely alone. The two argue, Olivia starts freaking out physically. Inco thoughtlessly pushes her back, not realizing how close to the edge she was. Olivia falls backwards down the staircase. He calls for help, when someone shows up he lies and says he heard her fall.

Inco visits Olivia in the hospital. She's now in a vegetative state. and he's been by her side for a few days.
Olivia's Dad finally arrives from out of town, and tells Inco the bad news, and that the doctors think she's probably not going to wake up.
Inco rushes to her side and has a breakdown.

Chapter 12b[di]

Four years later, Inco works with an art magazine/blog that will be having a show soon. He notices Olivia's name on the list of contributors, so he enters in one last desperate attempt to reconnect with her. At the gallery, Inco finds a visibly destitute Olivia. He considers going up to meet her, and finds the strength to. Inco and Olivia reconnect. Inco interviews her for an article, and they realize slowly they wouldn't be good for each other. The two part ways silently after.

Chapter 12c

Ten months later, Inco and Olivia are living together in a small apartment. Inco's about to leave for his class, he encourages Olivia good luck on her daily search for a job. He gives her encouragement, but it's a bit hollow due to it being part of a routine. In the meantime, she's trying to make ends meet by doing commission work online. Inco returns home, and the apartment looks distinctly older, hinting at the passage of time. Inco finds Olivia holed up in their room. He asks if she'd done any work that day, knowing the answer's going to be 'no'. After some small talk, Inco brings up his school's having a break soon, so they could go return 'back to where they used to live'. Olivia finally reluctantly agrees.

Back in their home neighborhoods, there's tension between the two as the trip back hadn't been going well so far. The two go back to visit St. Hammond, it's evident Olivia's putting on a happy face for Inco. They find a placard commemorating Iadakan, and Olivia breaks down. Inco brings up that Olivia hadn't ever gotten to say goodbye to Iadakan, so they should visit his tombstone. At the graveyard, it takes a while to find his grave. Olivia finally has the chance to say goodbye like she couldn't bring herself to do at the winter formal. The two embrace, Olivia finally starting to show signs of improvement.

Chapter 12d

Six years later, Inco and Olivia are back in Volcadera for the premiere of a small movie a production company they're working for. The two talk about the movie and check out the movie poster Olivia had helped design. The two go inside to meet Liz and Damien, where the four of them catch up. Liz is starting medical school, and Damien is a children's entertainer (like steve from blues' clues). Damien had brought a red carpet so they can have a red carpet premiere (it's a hideous 70's red carpet).

After the credits, the four walk out of the theater into the evening, Damien offers to give them a ride home, but Inco and Olivia decline. Inco and Olivia have a romantic reminiscence about what happened in high school and everything that'd led them

up to this moment. She pulls Inco into her chair and rolls down a hill like a ride. Fade to white.

note: likely debug ending if something breaks during score calculation
note: winter break is from [dec 20] to [jan 6], winter ball is in the early half of december

inco 5/5, olivia 5/5
inco points: inco has a surface level passion for anything trendy, he gets a point when he becomes more invested in the things he cares about, choosing to pursue actions that he finds personally attractive as opposed to whatever might be trendy or has otherwise wider appeal, particularly in regards to social situations

olivia points: olivia gets a point when she opens herself up and presents a part of herself that is otherwise hidden behind her fear of patronization and learns to overcome the cynically nihilist mindset she has. Her view therefore can be redirected into her competitiveness

[a]You might say she employs "Cheap Tricks."
[b]xxx none of these zoomers are going to get that
[c]No one but us is going to get this reference.
[d]Does that make it sound better?
[e]Could do with a Clarkson reference below, just to drive the point home.
[f]0/10 joke please apply yourself :^)
[g]Further touch-ups required.
[h]We could just go with Ben picking Inco up from the front door once the announcement is made
[i]I think Spidey suggested having a CG to introduce each main character as they come along. This feels like a perfect opportunity to do so, if we wanted to. I know the argument against that was that it would detract from Olivia's introduction, so something to keep in mind if we want to do it or not.
[j]Further touch-ups required.
[k]We could just go with Ben picking Inco up from the front door once the announcement is made
[l]Further touch-ups required.
[m]We could just go with Ben picking Inco up from the front door once the announcement is made
[n]Gotta update this CG with Olivia looking less angry, and more apathetic.

[o]If we mention that Ben and Inco share third period, they should talk during it, no? Or Ben's absence should be noted.
[p]Looks like you already touched upon it, heh.
[q]Potential past material to work off of.
[r]Potential running theme of Ben being terrible at comedy.
[s]Dunno if this is the best way to introduce the mechanic angle on Mia. Ben basically just drops 2 lines when it could be something displayed better by her personality, actions, state of dress, etc.
[t]We can show this later. I think this is a good enough introduction for chapter 1
[u]The 'pair'asaur. Hahahaha
[v]it occurs to me there's something to be said about someone with the mindset of inco going this far out of his way to care for the main feature that sets him apart from everyone else in the setting (him being human and having skin, as opposed to scales). Think it should definitely be tied into his views there in some way.
[w]That's a good point, and if we play it that angle I could see it becoming a part of his obsession with his facade: He has to present himself as a good human in every respect, including skin.
[x]The 50's stuff with Mia needs to go. It doesn't reinforce her character, it's just a gimmick that detracts from who she is.
[y]Rangto wants it on record that he likes it because he was a greaser in highschool and hated the jets
[z]Acknowledged, but I do think it should go. IT just feels way too out of place for a high school bully to have this inexplicit character trait
[aa]Volcadera is based off of California, and here in Cali, people just LOVE to ride around in hot-rod cars from the 50's and 60's. That, or they ride around in low-rider hydraulics with paintjobs of Santa Maria and other gangster fixtures. It's just the culture, amigo.
[ab]this bit needs to be cleaned up
[ac]This seems like a prime moment for Iadakan to introduce one of the main messages of the game
[ad]"I get the impression there's a bigger emphasis on being familiar with the school in itself."

"Guess school pride is important to the staff."
[ae]this is the first time she uses his name in a one-on-one environment, yes? shouldn't more attention be drawn to this fact?
[af]the implication that olivia's some sort of spectacle to be seen for her disability doesn't really fall in line with inco's character
[ag]this gives off the feeling like she's paranoid asking this, kinda weird
[ah]le creepypasta has arrived
[ai]this makes no sense, it's a color wheel
if need be inco can just look this crap up on his phone
[aj]it's been commented that olivia is smug a few times now, the

player should be able to tell through the dialogue alone, not because they're repeatedly told that she's smug
[ak]sunglasses
[al]1. it's a color wheel, if olivia wants to do anything she can just dot where the correct colors go in each slot
2. inco asking for someone to help with an entire assignment seems out of character
[am]she's not tsundere
and knowing her character she'd actually do it correctly and leave in-depth notes that are perhaps above the level inco's able to understand
[an]this isn't damien's call
it's late and I don't feel like editing myself
[ao]he needs to say something more unambiguously blunt for this to make sense
[ap]have her mutter this to herself kinda shyly
[aq]what
[ar]would be better if she is described to use her tail as blinkers on a car, or in this case just slammed the tail down as a brake
[as]would also fit her apathetic nature more to just ignore the request instead of responding negatively, not even necessarily out of malice but rather because she is only aware that it's common for this sort of treatment to happen to people in wheelchairs despite it never happening to her. this lack of experience in that regard would then have olivia just default to silence as she debates with herself what she should do, ultimately accomplishing nothing and making inco think he messed up.
[at]I don't get it, is he joining her in the elevator here? if so, then being in an enclosed space with the main love interest would warrant its' own scene
[au]thought inco was going to just be using the vending machines, hence the entire scene introducing them before
[av]clunky line, would recommend redoing
[aw]it could be justified and misinterpreted that this is just because they were just caught and not because they don't like olivia
granted, with the misunderstanding theme here with Mia later on just using olivia for her ability and not her wheelchair if elaborated on in that way that could very well be the point
[ax]joke's being overplayed at this point
[ay]not a good pun
[az]think this should be phrased more as inco can tell olivia must be one of the 'unpopular' kids and he's now in a position he can be judged by the other students if he's 'in' or not
[ba]the whole point is that people see and one of the risks is getting caught and having it be seen by the teacher
his entire motivation for wanting to join in is so he can talk about it later
[bb]a good joke here would be to have him headbutt the first student to try to leave, ironically providing time for everyone

else to leave first
[bc]Do we want to make Inco's reluctance to engage with Olivia due to his desire to foster an image of being with the "in" crowd explicit or implicit here? Because I don't think the "I don't want to get in trouble" angle works 100% with what was established
[bd]inco should stew in his thoughts a bit more, this sequence is a bit short as is
[be]I know Nerd commented that Olivia should be excitable when talking about things she really cares about, and cold at other times. Olivia just turning away feels like a missed opportunity to at least have some dialogue, so could we fit something in that adheres to how we want Olivia to unfold? Inco is still engaging with her, just not engaging with her in a way that is positive for her, so I think some dialogue is justified.
[bf]Alternatively, we could use another character to intercede here in some capacity, like how Reed forces Anon to get help from Fang during music class. It doesn't have to be a character forcing Inco and Olivia together, but we could throw out some dialogue that eludes to the fact that the player made a negative choice.
[bg]Scaler needs to look like she's smiling through clenched teeth here, either by having her display her angry sprite facing away from Ferris for a second and then swapping back to happy and facing him, or by making this a particular expression (which I don't think is outside the realm of possibility for Scaler).
[bh]Done
[bi]Scaler needs to look like she's smiling through clenched teeth here, either by having her display her angry sprite facing away from Ferris for a second and then swapping back to happy and facing him, or by making this a particular expression (which I don't think is outside the realm of possibility for Scaler).
[bj]Done
[bk]intro's weak, have farris scan and profile inco as though awaiting a response
[bl]Farris and Inco's dialogue is really stiff and awkward here. I don't know if we're going for the "two strangers who both have to leave and end up having to leave in the same direction" sense of awkwardness or if the dialogue just is off. I suppose if I don't have anything to suggest in its place then who am I to complain, but I think this should be earmarked for an update.
[bm]this would be a negative development for inco, who had thought that version of popularity was ideal
or he'd at least be more conflicted on it
[bn]he has access to the internet and busies himself with blogs that likely pertain to cultures of the world, this is out of character for him
[bo]Weren't we moving away from this angle with Inco? He's less of an SJW in the current story, so this line feels a tad out-of-place.
[bp]We could do something like "Thoughts like that aren't going to win you back into the popular crowd, Inco", or something along

those lines
[bq]thinking about
[br]this implies he's gone through the exact same experience before, if even his school photo pic we made has him saying he wants to try getting new friends and this had happened, he'd have a completely different approach and know from the outset that that sort of popularity isn't actually good
this one line fundamentally makes inco's entire backstory and motivations redundant
[bs]Spidey will REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE when he reads this.
[bt]ooc for olivia
[bu]The implication is that Olivia doesn't want anything to do with Inco when he's surrounded by the popular crowd before. But now that Inco is sinking to the bottom, Olivia is taking more interest in him. Of course, she has her ulterior motive of using him to further her own self-image, which has drawn her closer.
[bv]this scene rambles a bit
[bw]b-baka!
[bx]._.
[by]This is also a good moment to have Iadakan interject or give some sort of lesson that ties into Inco's art piece. Maybe he could call on people in class, and Inco gets voluntold to answer, but it's clear he doesn't know shit (and it plants the seeds that the piece with his name on it isn't his).
[bz]This is some global-warming-tier ice breaking between Inco and Olivia. Are we okay with the pace at which their relationship has progressed? Should it be ADDRESSED by Inco?
Remember: Players are fucking dumb so you have to point something out to them for them to get it.
[ca]Just to summarize what I talked about in VC, I don't think Olivia's emotion should be that of anger towards Inco. If anything, it should be resigned disappointment. Olivia's default assumption when interacting with people is that people are going to treat her only based on her wheelchair, and when Inco does that exact thing in this scene, Olivia should basically go "Well, I don't know why I expected differently." Inco's made a fool of Olivia, because she thought Inco was starting to subvert these expectations, but here he goes right back to what she thought.
[cb]👆
[cc]This branch of the narrative needs to be extended to show how this branch comes back to the central narrative. As it is right now, we're cutting the scene right at the point where the deviation is strongest, which then ruins the flow into the next scene, which ostensibly should be the same no matter what you picked.
[cd]I wonder if we're not making Olivia too moody? At some point, the wall has to come down, and I feel like it should be coming down around now, but I'm not seeing that reflected here. In the scene before, Olivia and Inco were joking around at the lunch table which SHOULD be a big significant point in their relationship, but here she's acting like the ice queen she was in chapters 1 and 2. Even if Olivia wants to keep everyone at arm's

length because of how she thinks they treat her, Inco should constantly be showing her that she might be wrong by slipping through her wall.
[ce]It feels like they don't sync up, so to speak
[cf]not subtle, seemingly out of character
[cg]this entire interaction has no reason to exist
[ch]weird comment, would remove
[ci]lacking in subtlety
[cj]would rephrase this, it's also really weird
[ck]this is presented in entirely the wrong order
for this to work to maximum effect, the piece would need to be shown first to give inco enough time to gauge it, wonder why someone near him is knocking his shoulder congratulatorily, and brush it off as genuine excitement before the name fades in and the real scene kicks off
[cl]this is like a fourth of the length it needs to be
quite possibly the biggest opportunity to break open inco's mind and show what he's about
[cm]this hasn't been established nearly as much as it should be for this to be a warranted statement
[cn]Gotta make this line conform to what we talked about regarding that scene - that it's more Olivia coming at Mia, and Mia going "what the fuck are you talking about, weirdo?" than abject bullying
[co]Olivia is already in the AP class, however, so I'm not quite sure what you're referring to here
[cp]'at that' is about as useful as 'though' at the end of a sentence
[cq]overexplaining things
[cr]Should expand on this, and really show how Olivia's walls are coming down. The emotional scarring of losing her mother is one of the fundamental things she carries with her, so her disclosing this to Inco should be correspondingly VERY emotional
[cs]Are we really going to just transition right back into school like this? Shouldn't Inco acknowledge that he and Olivia just shared a powerful moment together, or that he's starting to have feelings for her? I understand the introspection, but that could easily be done at the end of the day with, say, Iadakan, which not only gets him more involved in the plot but also ties the chapter up nicely.
[ct]I wonder if we couldn't do this with choreography
[cu]the chronology of this is a little weird
[cv]rethink this name
[cw]Put a CG here
[cx]Put Inco in the back seat with Olivia. He should WANT to be sitting with her. Again, this is the chapter where the romance starts heating up, so turn up the temperature to help it along. Inco should be grappling with his emotions about her, the art content, his public persona; they all morph and twist around each other. Does he like Olivia more than he likes being liked? Inco should be asking these questions, WE should be putting these questions in his mind.

[cy]Again, I've said this before, but there's very little in the way of introspection with Inco. It feels like we never get a chance to know what he's thinking or struggling with, no thoughts against a black scene at the end of a chapter. This story, like Snoot Game, needs those introspection moments; otherwise, it feels like Inco isn't even the player character.
[cz]If you needed an explanation for how this safe, you can say the hook has a quick disconnect for sudden jolts.
[da]Another great spot for a CG. Hell, you could do the entire car trip as one, starting with wheeling Olivia through the halls, to getting in the car, and then seeing the city scape pass along the windows as Inco and Olivia look out from the inside.
[db]Liz has a long neck, why not make her peek out of the car to watch?
[dc]All of this should be condensed into ~5 lines or so, this is a long time to dwell on a wheelchair. I understand that it's Olivia's livelihood, but if what we're trying to express is that even Olivia's means of transporting herself from point A to point B is difficult then we can do it in a lot less than what is here.
[dd]Again, Inco should want to go solo with Olivia, no? I know I keep harping on about this but it's like, why have the romance angle be in the story if we don't commit 100% to it? The story is about Inco and Olivia's relationship, and at this point we're into Act 2 with feelings blossoming; but, Inco is acting like he hardly cares.
[de]Again, this can be cut down into fewer lines
[df]Again, this can be cut down into fewer lines
[dg]Do High Schools even have Home Ec anymore? I could understand this being earlier in Olivia's life but to have her enrolled as a senior seems odd
[dh]This follows *immediately* after the scene at the eulogy, right? This is following Inco berating the crowd?

The reason I ask, is that in *this* scenario, Olivia is damn-near catatonic, whereas in "Ending 2," she's furious, and laying into the crowd herself. What transpires between Olivia *fleeing* and the top of the staircase to make Olivia and Inco argue energetically enough to come to blows with one another?

Would it perhaps make more sense to make the mounting pressure cause Olivia to blow up, and that energy is only amplified by Inco's desire to craft a good public image? *That* could definitely lead to personal attacks.
[di]Continuing from my other comment:

If Olivia blows up at the preamble to Ending 1, for Ending 2's eulogy, her remarks could be just as vitriolic, but more snide, sarcastic, and/or bitter, even more *justified,* so that everyone who hears her is uncomfortable.

Inco's demand that she apologize for her true (if exceedingly negative) opinion on the rest of the school, could then be taken as Inco being a wishy-washy hack, and lead to their breakup.